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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

JUDAISM OF JESUS' DAY

Submitted by

Ruth Jensen Cook

(A.B., Southwestern College, 1925)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1930

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## PREFACE

In dealing with so vast a subject as "Judaism of Jesus' Day" it is necessary that certain limitations be made. The aim of the thesis is to give a general picture of the life, worship and doctrines of the people among whom Jesus lived and worked. I have tried to select only those details which best portray that picture, since it was not my intention to make an exhaustive study of my subject. The reader will notice that descriptions of elements of Judaism given in the section of this thesis called "The Background of History", are carried over as adequate descriptions for the time of Jesus, except as I have noted changes in the division entitled "The Nature of Judaism in Jesus' Day". Again I have limited my subject in considering only Palestinian Judaism. Religious beliefs and practices peculiar to the Jews of the Dispersion did not form so direct a background for the life of Jesus as did the religion of the people of his immediate surroundings. Walker, as well as Oesterley, (See prefaces to their books listed in the bibliography.) write on the supposition that the teachings of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigraphic literature were more the popular religious conceptions than were the teachings of the Pharisees. However I felt it wise to abide by the opinion of the majority of authors, and thus I have not considered the teachings peculiar to the above-mentioned literature.

Ruth Jensen Cook.



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In dealing with the subject of "Judaism"

there, too, it is necessary that certain limitations be

made. The aim of the series is to give a general picture

of the life, worship and doctrines of the people known

as Jews, living and working. I have tried to select only

those details which have bearing on the picture, since it

was not my intention to make an exhaustive study of the

subject. The reader will notice that descriptions of

elements of Judaism given in the sections of this series

called "The Background of History" are omitted over and

over again. I have included the history of the people, except as I

have noted changes in the Jewish religion. The following

of Judaism in general, but I have limited my subject

to a consideration of the Jewish religion. Religious beliefs

and practices peculiar to the Jews of the Diaspora are

not taken as direct background for the life of Israel as

all the religions of the people of the Israelite tradition.

Further, as well as "Judaism," this reference to Israel

people (Judaism and Christianity) will be the responsibility

of the responsibility of the people and the Jewish people.

It is necessary to note that Jewish religious customs have

been the result of the Jewish people. However, I feel it also

to note that the Jewish people are the result of history, and

that I feel the responsibility of the Jewish people to the

above-mentioned history.

With Jewish God.



# THE JUDAISM OF JESUS' DAY

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with the highly organized industrialism, the complicated system of international relations and the variety of ordinary daily living. Twenty centuries have witnessed great changes in the living and relations of the world, but that does not mean that the world has changed so long ago and we are of great significance in the world's history and civilization. The world is still the same, but the conditions of living and the relations of the world have changed. The world is still the same, but the conditions of living and the relations of the world have changed. The world is still the same, but the conditions of living and the relations of the world have changed.

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## THE JUDAISM OF JESUS' DAY

### Introduction

For the Christian student, hoping fully to understand the life and teachings of Jesus, it is essential that he must first understand the background of that personality. The world in which Jesus lived was certainly not as complex as our modern civilized world with its highly organized industrialism, its complicated systems of international relations and its variety of ordinary daily living. Twenty centuries have wrought great changes in the lives and relations of the peoples of this world, but that does not mean that that civilization of so long ago was one of great simplicity with no intermingling influences and complexities of thinking and living. On the contrary, the environment in which Jesus lived was very much a conglomeration of social, political, philosophical and religious elements gathered together from several great world civilizations.

The historical conditions previous to Jesus' time were very favorable to this mingling of ideas, customs, and usages of the great world powers, at least from the viewpoint of the Jewish people (which must necessarily be



Introduction

For the Christian student, however, it is essential to understand the life and teachings of Jesus, it is essential that he must first understand the background of that personality. The world in which Jesus lived was not a unity but a complex of various divided worlds with its highly organized industrialism, its complex system of international relations and its very city of ordinary daily living. Jewish contacts have brought great changes in the life and relations of the people of this world, but that does not mean that that civilization of so long ago was one of great similarity with no international influences and complex lines of thinking and living. On the contrary, the environment in which Jesus lived was very much a conglomerate of social, political, philosophical and religious elements gathered together from several great world civilizations.

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our view point for this thesis). Babylonian civilization was forced upon the attention of the Jews who were taken as exiles to Babylon. Although some influences were negative in effect, yet great changes resulted in the lives of the captives. Later, by conquest, came the Persian rule and as the Jews hailed Cyrus as a deliverer sent by God, one can readily see how admiration for the Persians naturally would lead either to conscious or unconscious mingling of Persian ideas and customs with their own. The Greek influence was strongly imposed on the Jews by organized efforts to hellenize Palestine. The work of the hellenizing high priests and the persecutions of Antiochus IV brought a negative result in the form of the Maccabean Revolt. On the other hand there was a positive mingling of Jewish and Greek elements; as, for example in a religious line, we have the teachings of Philo whose aim of reconciling Jew and Greek resulted in the "highest religious literature uninspired by Christianity".<sup>1.</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to discover as nearly as possible the exact nature of the religion of the race of people to which Jesus belonged. Judaism may

1. Fairweather-Jesus and the Greeks p.172.





be termed the greatest and most inclusive element which goes to form the background for the life of Jesus. Since it was during the historical periods mentioned above in which four great world civilizations--Hebrew, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek--were being intermingled that Judaism developed into a complicated system of religion, it is essential to give considerable time and space to its historical background.

This consideration will involve a study of: (1) the religious life of the Jews before the Babylonian exile; (2) the exile and its religious significance; (3) the growth of Judaism during the Persian period, which will include the policy of Cyrus, Ezra and his work, and the Samaritan Schism; (4) the great crisis of the Greek period, namely, the Maccabean Revolt; and finally, (5) the rise of the religious groups of Judaism, i.e. the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the schools of thought headed by Shammai and Hillel.

With this background, it will be possible to approach the central problem of this thesis, the nature of the Judaism of Jesus' day. In spite of the fact that some Jewish writers<sup>1</sup> claim that only a Pharisee could know Pharisaism, and surely without knowing Pharisaism one could not know Judaism, I feel justified in

1. Herford--The Pharisees p. 11





undertaking a study of Judaism. Undoubtedly it is true that we Gentiles must look at Judaism through different eyes and with different feelings than do the Jews, and it is difficult to avoid all prejudices. Again, Jewish literature would be more accessible to the Jew. Herford points out that only Pharisees<sup>1</sup> would have access to the literature of Pharisaism and that Christian writers on the subject have used three main sources and have failed to find the truth concerning Pharisaism in any one of them. He contends that the New Testament is anti-Pharisaic and therefore, biased and untrue in its picture of Judaism; that Josephus wrote for the Romans and was ignorant of Judaism; and that Apocalyptic literature, the third source, was not concerned with Judaism. Herford's criticism here is probably well grounded in a great many instances but it is neither a valid reason for not making a study of Judaism, nor a logical argument for disregarding the New Testament as a source of information. D. W. Riddle of the University of Southern California in his book entitled "Jesus and the Pharisees" has made a discovery as to why the New Testament pictures Pharisaism as it does and to what extent it is justified. If the general opinion concerning the corruption of Pharisaism be true,

1. Herford--The Pharisees p. 14.





how could so decadent a movement be the parent of so vigorous a child as Judaism after the break-up of the state? In studying the Gospels in order, he shows how the later works elaborate upon and add to the anti-Pharisaic elements of Mark and how both emphasis and bitterness increase with the later date of a work; for example it is significant that the seven woes appear in Matthew rather than Mark. He considers Paul an abnormal Jew due to his unusual temperament and therefore his experience was not that of most Pharisees. "The psychologists would say that Paul's transfer of loyalty was caused by temperamental instability; the extremity of effort to realize the norm of Judaism led only to the perception of failure which it was next to impossible to admit, with the result that a strain of latent sadism led him to push his effort at the realization of his desire to the point of the persecution of the rival group. This activity, however, only made the more certain the incompatibility of the man to his loyalty, so that with that swing to another extreme which was characteristic of Paul, the satisfaction formerly sought in a rigorous interpretation of Judaism was actually found in the emotional values of the new faith.<sup>1</sup>" In general, he feels that the New Testament, if properly studied, can be a great help to the understanding of





Judaism and his conclusion makes clear his opinion. "As the Pharisees are known by modern scholarship, and as modern scholarship understands Jesus, the Piety of the Pharisees and the Jewishness of Jesus are found to be friendly rather than antipathetic. It is possible to witness Jesus living his life within the environment of first century Judaism, and in fact depending upon his background for much of his greatness. It is possible, with equal confidence, to witness the extension of Christianity, as the cult of Jesus' followers, into non-Jewish localities, and to see it in non-Jewish situations developing un-Jewish habits and customs. Indeed it is possible to witness the shading over of their attitudes from non-Jewish into anti-Jewish positions. It is consistent with what is known of the psychology of religious groups to find Christians, for example in Rome, developing customs which not only differ from those of their Jewish neighbors, but of which the difference was consciously held and mentioned by contrast. Their non-observance of dietary distinctions or their failure to rest upon the Sabbath day, was important for them; they found it to be of value not only to emphasize the difference, but to secure backing for their position by articulating their attitudes as having been taught by Jesus. In this way it is not a strain upon





the imagination to understand the Antiochean Gospel's use of the epithet 'hypocrite' to designate those who differed from their ideal. Finally when the rival movements were in a relationship which brought from each a literature of defence, the outcome is clear. The traditions of Jesus and the Pharisees, when taken as produced by the necessities of the Christian communities, become at once understandable in themselves and useful in the delineation of the life of the early Christians." <sup>1</sup>

Although there must be some limitation for one who is not a Jew in dealing with a Jewish subject such as Judaism, still, being a Jew cannot be acquired and so it behooves the writer of this thesis to give due consideration to Jewish as well as Christian scholars and to try to draw an unprejudiced picture of the religion of the Jews.

The basis of Judaism was the Torah or the "teaching" of the Law. The nature, development, and forms of the written law will logically be the opening consideration in the study of that religion. The "tradition of the Elders" or the unwritten law grew up as a second authority but it played an important role, at least in the eyes of the Pharisees.

1. Riddle p. 178.



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The three great institutions of Judaism; the Sanhedrin, the Temple and the synagogue, served to give authority, unity of worship and education to the Jewish people; and undoubtedly they were the instruments which perpetuated their religion and made it so effective in the lives of the masses of people. A study of these will reveal one of the great secrets of the loyalty of a Jew to his religion and non-Jewish people might well learn this lesson of the value of religious training and education persistently carried out under authority.

Just as Christian denominations have grown up through the years as issues of doctrine arise and the like-minded group together, so Judaism had her sects. Of these we will study the beliefs and activities of the three most important ones; namely, the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes.

Probably no other people had a religion and a national life so closely bound together as had the Jews. Their religion was their nation and their nation was their religion. Thus the social and political aspects of Judaism are important considerations. Strange as it may seem, we find in this religion a narrow nationalism coupled with a tendency toward universalism. In spite of Jewish hatred and contempt for the heathen, proselyting was a policy of Judaism.





The doctrines involved in Judaism are concerned in the main with ideas of God and man and their relations to each other. The character of God is such that He deemed it wise to reveal His will to a chosen people by means of the Holy Scriptures. The majesty and inaccessibility of God made it necessary for God to have intermediary ministers, as angels and demons through which He could deal with men. This led to the doctrine of the separateness of God. Man's relation to God was both national and individual. Life was considered a struggle between the good and evil tendencies in human nature. A failure to live up to the law was a sin regardless of cause and must be followed by repentance and forgiveness if God's favor was to be regained. By Jesus' time the thinkers of Judaism in an effort to solve the problem of the suffering of the righteous, had developed a definite doctrine of the resurrection and the after-life.

Although we Christians believe that Jesus brought to the world the principles of a religion which superseded and advanced beyond Judaism, still, both were the outgrowths of the ancient Hebrew faith and in many respects are closely related. Certainly the religion of the Jews is more than a method of creating hypocrites and self-righteous legalists. On the contrary, in many respects Judaism should be the teacher of Christianity.





If "to understand all is to forgive all", then studies of the nature of this thesis should reap harvests of tolerance.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### The Religious Life of the Jews before and during the Babylonian Exile.

Before the first Babylonian deportation in 597 B. C. when young King Jehoiakin together with all the nobles, warriors and skilled artisans of the land were carried away captive, Judah was a monarchy--the same as other governments of that day. No doubt the Southern Kingdom had taken great pride in the fact that they had been able to withstand their enemies and retain their political organization longer than had Israel. It seemed that they were favored of God and because they had been thus far preserved as a people they felt that they were truly and peculiarly the chosen people of Jehovah. Was not God's dwelling-place, the Temple at Jerusalem, in their midst?

Since the destruction of the high places by King Josiah (621 B. C.) the modes of worship for the people of Judah were confined to those that took place in the Temple at Jerusalem. This made necessary pilgrimages to the Holy City for the great Feast days at which time the





animal sacrifices were made, accompanied by public reading<sup>1</sup> of the scriptures and fasting. Priests were the chosen representatives of God, who presented the sacrifices that they might be acceptable to Jehovah. The Temple itself, was practically the only religious institution of that day. Morality entered into this early Jewish religion in a national sense as urged by the prophets and of course to some extent it was realized that national morality depended upon individual conduct, but in general, righteousness was a matter of state concern. Success or failure in this respect would bring to the nation prosperity and freedom or disaster and bondage. As long as they were allowed to live in their homeland, with Jerusalem and its Temple which made Jehovah seem near to them, and a king chosen of God, ruling over them, they felt favored of God.

#### Effects of the Exile on Judaism.

Then came the exile! Nebuchadnezzar swept down upon them. All the men of high rank including their king, were carried away from Jerusalem. The Temple was destroyed before their eyes. With their hopes thus razed, it was only natural that the spirit of revolt seized those left in Jerusalem and an unsuccessful rebellion

1. Jeremiah 36:6-8.





resulted in a second deportation (586 B. C.). Just a few of the ruling class and the peasantry were left in and near Jerusalem. Those poorer people were left by Nebuchadnezzar because he wished to prevent the land becoming desolate. A trusty governor ruled them successfully for a period of time, but when through treachery he was slain, the Jewish community was again broken by many fleeing to Egypt and then by a third deportation to Babylon--probably to avenge this assassination as suggested by Kent.<sup>1</sup>

The total number of persons carried into Babylon in connection with the three deportations was probably about 50,000.<sup>2</sup> However, these were only a fraction of all the people of Judah and probably all were taken from or near Jerusalem. The villages of Judah retained their populations, but the lot of these people in Palestine was not as desirable as one might think. Due to the fact that they were denied any independent political organization for themselves, ~~and that~~ they were left the helpless prey of robber bands and bitter enemies. They suffered torture and slavery at the pitiless hands of their foes. With such conditions prevailing it is not surprising that literature such as Lamentations should be forth-coming in this period and that the religious life

1. Kent. p. 19

2. Ibid. p. 19





in Palestine was neither vigorous, nor exalted, nor progressive. Ezekiel's accusations of deeds of lust,<sup>1</sup> bloodshed, and idolatry were undoubtedly well grounded.

When the Babylonians selected the Jews for deportation, they were careful to take all leaders that none might be left to head an insurrection. Skilled artisans were chosen for they would be useful in Nebuchadnezzar's vast building plans. Thus the best elements in the Jewish race were found in Babylon after the exile, where they were permitted to settle in the same locality which was probably the rich well-watered land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers southeast of the Babylon. Here, all of the first deportation, except two kings and some leaders of rebellions, enjoyed almost the same degree of freedom they had had in Palestine. Jeremiah encouraged them to build houses, plant gardens and raise families and live peacefully with the Babylonians.<sup>2</sup> Craftsmen were undoubtedly given opportunities to ply their trades and Jewish genius along those lines must have made them desirable workmen.

The treatment received at the hands of the Babylonians by those of the second and third deportations may not have been so desirable as that pictured above, because their offences were greater. Certain Old Testament passages imply slavery, robbery and suffering.<sup>3</sup>

1. Ezekiel 33:25-27.

2. Jeremiah 29:5,6.

3. Ezek. 34:27; Isa. 14:4,5; Isa. 47:6; 42:22.



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1. Nehemiah 5:1-17.  
2. Jeremiah 29:1-2.  
3. Ezekiel 24:1-14; 33:1-6; 34:1-12; 35:1-6; 36:1-10; 37:1-14; 38:1-15; 39:1-16; 40:1-2; 41:1-11; 42:1-15; 43:1-12; 44:1-14; 45:1-8; 46:1-12; 47:1-12; 48:1-35; 49:1-13; 50:1-20; 51:1-11; 52:1-5.

However the lot of the majority of exiles was more favorable than one would naturally expect under such circumstances.

Even though these conditions in which the exiles lived were not so undesirable, still they were far from happy. Their national and religious hopes had been shattered. They had seen the dwelling place of Jehovah destroyed. What assurance had they that Jehovah was in their midst? It seemed that He had deserted them and gone to abide elsewhere. There was no place to worship and make their sacrifices and as a result all they ate was unclean. They were filled with shame because their lot was a sign of God's displeasure. The rich beautiful land in which they lived was not lovely but unclean to them, and they longed for the barren uplands of Judah.

At first despair filled their lives but through the gradual work of loyal prophets, a hope was planted in their hearts which inspired them to adapt themselves to their surroundings for the time being, but always looking forward to the time when they would be able to return to their beloved Zion. Of course, they could not have a temple--a temple on any other than the sacred site in Jerusalem was inconceivable to them. Consequently, until they could rebuild the temple all the religious life which centered around it would be denied them. Since they could not have their feast days with firstlings



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for sacrifices their worship took the form of fasting. Denying one's self food could be done anywhere and at anytime and it gave an adequate expression to their feelings of shame, despair and hope. Previous to this time the most stress had been laid on the observance of the great feast days, but since these were no longer possible it was only natural that more and more stress be laid upon the institution of the Sabbath which could be observed away from the homeland. Another reason why the exile may have been the period during which the Sabbath received more emphasis was due to the fact that the Babylonians also specified the seventh day of the week as a day of rest.

It would be interesting to know just how these exiles observed the Sabbath in that strange land. Perhaps there were certain ceremonial acts which they performed in their homes and of course, that which was defined as labor was forbidden on that day. However, it seems that there must have been more than this on the Sabbath. A homesick people, such as these Jews were, would long for fellowship and it seems more than likely that there must have been some sort of community gathering for the purpose of worshipping and studying the scriptures which they were learning to value more than ever before. Probably there was little organization to these meetings at first; small groups simply planned to get together and carry out a service as it seemed pleasing to the group. As time





passed a more definite and uniform order of service was developed, buildings were established as meeting places, and certain duties were assigned to individuals. During this period, both public and private prayer became more important features of the Jewish religion than hitherto-~~fore~~. Surely it is not too much to conjecture that the peculiar conditions and needs of the exiles gave rise to the institution of the synagogue.

Strange as it may seem, danger and disaster are often the stepping-stones to opportunity and progress. So it proved to be with the exiled Jews. What seemed to them defeat and disgrace, led them to serious thinking and rapid religious progress.

The exile brought a change in the form of Government. The thinkers saw that their kings had failed to keep them from national sin and disaster so they looked upon monarchs as useless and in their place set up an ideal of a priestly nobility with a high priest as its head. Politics had not brought them national unity and purity, so they turned to ritual and religion in hopes that through them they might regain God's favor. A hierarchy was superseding the monarchy. In the experience of the exile we find the roots of thought which grew into the rule of the priesthood in the Judaism of Jesus' time.

Again, in the exile, the prophets won their victory.





The truth of their words was tested in the minds of the people when the disaster they foretold really happened. How could their messages be taken lightly as before when it was so evident that they knew of what they spoke?

The exile was considered a punishment by a just God and thus, their sinfulness was proved. But humiliation was not all that the prophetic teachings brought them.

If the prophets were right in part of their teachings, and they had witnessed the proof of their doom, then the whole of their messages was true. So they who had sin-  
 had grasped the promises of hope, and strove by fasting, atoning offerings and prayers--about the only modes of worship accessible to them--to regain their national and individual purity, that their hopes might be well grounded. Thus, from this view point all ritual received added emphasis. In still another respect the message sounded by the prophets won victory in the exile. While yet in Judah, these people looking around them and seeing heathen idolatry, were attracted by it. Human nature always looks with envious eye toward that which is beyond reach. But when they were carried captive into the midst of heathenism, the many gods of the Babylonians lost their attractiveness for them and the prophet's warnings against idolatry assured them that Jehovah was the One God, the God of Israel.



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The exile made God the supreme ruler of the universe. Before this experience, Jehovah was just slightly greater than other gods, mainly because he was Israel's God. His dwelling place and work were restricted to the boundaries of Canaan and particularly to the Temple at Jerusalem. But the Temple was destroyed, and finding themselves in a strange land and gradually rising above the depression their fate brought them, these exiles came to see that Jehovah still existed and that His interests extended beyond the limitations of their home and even to them who had so grievously sinned against Him. The gods of the heathen became insignificant compared to Jehovah. They saw for the first time that they were a unique people not because of any worth of theirs, but solely because God had chosen them. Jehovah was the God of all and they were His chosen people. Thus, they realized their utter dependence upon God and the humility they felt prepared them for greater good.

This broader conception of God caused them to look upon their heathen neighbors with a different attitude. Israel was chosen of God to help Him work out His Divine purpose in history and thus the heathen were not merely the object of Divine vengeance. This attitude is shown in the fact that Cyrus, a Persian, was recognized as God's anointed to deliver His people. We find here a dim recognition of the high ideal of the



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brotherhood of all mankind which reached its highest form in the scriptures of Second Isaiah's suffering servant of Jehovah. But only a few Jews realized that God is the Father of all mankind while the majority abandoned this ideal for the hope of a temporal world kingdom with the Jews at its head.

Judaism owes to the exile many of the strongholds of her faith, but if any one thing is more responsible for the strength of the Jewish religion than another, it is surely the synagogue, as it developed to function for worship and study, in the lives of the masses of the people. It made possible a popular religious education such as that of which no other religion can boast. Is it too much to say that Judaism too would have been lacking in that respect, had it not been for the exile?

The severe testings of the exile may have proved to be too great an ordeal for many--perhaps the majority; but those who stood faithful and true through it all, must have gained a sense of personal responsibility and deep satisfaction, such as never before. The passionate zeal that prompted them to faithfulness stands out in marked contrast to the indifference that prevailed before the exile. This sifting process, as the exile proved to be, bound together, by common suffering and common faith, a nucleus out of which grew Judaism.



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## The Growth of Jewish Religion during the Persian Period.

In the year 538 B. C. Cyrus the founder of the Persian empire captured Babylon and the period of the exile was ended. The policy of this great conqueror was an antithesis to that of the Assyrian and Babylonian rulers. Rather than trying to crush these captive subjects, he was considerate of their welfare and tolerant toward their religion. In granting them desired privileges he gained their favor and thus his kingdom was strengthened. It was in accordance with this policy that he issued a decree ordering the Temple at Jerusalem to be rebuilt and the treasured vessels carried away<sup>1</sup> by Nebuchadnezzar, to be returned. He also gave the Jews in Babylonia permission to return to Palestine, but it is quite improbable that there was an immediate return of the entire community to Judah. Homes, rich lands, and the ease of their lots held many in the land of their adoption, but likely a zealous band did return and help in the reconstruction of the Temple answering the appeals of Haggai and Zechariah.

The seventy years following the completion of the Temple were full of disappointments and failures. Cyrus' successors were not so kind as he had been. Drought and famine further proved God's displeasure. Their neighboring enemies took advantage of their weakness. Temple services were neglected and morals grew lax and degenerate.

1. Foakes-Jackson, Pages 339-340.



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Then came the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the direction of Nehemiah. But what is significant here is the fact that along with his work of constructing a fortification around the city he saw the existing evils among his countrymen and established as reforms certain new precedents which later were embodied in the Priestly Code. Two of his reforms were simply demanding obedience to the old laws from which the common practice had fallen. He demanded that parents should not sell a child into slavery, and that a Jew should not take<sup>1</sup> interest from an oppressed brother. In the early years of Nehemiah's work he opposed intermarriage with the heathen very little, but upon his second return to Jerusalem, he bitterly opposed it. He stripped a Temple room set aside by the High Priest, Eliashib, for Tobiah, the Ammonite, a relative by marriage. He assailed the intermarried and had them swear that their children would marry only within their own race. Later he expelled the High Priest's grandson from Jerusalem for marrying the daughter of Sanballat, a Samaritan leader. Previous to Nehemiah, the Jews were divided regarding the attitude to take toward intermarriage. Those in good circumstances aristocratically, the rich, and the wealthy priests favored it, while the Jews of the Diaspora were particularly opposed. Further, Nehemiah made great Sabbath reforms. He

ly viewpoint, gave Ezra, the Priest, credit where possible.

1. Nehemiah 5:1-14.

2. Deuteronomy 14:22-23; 15:12-15.



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severely reprimanded the rulers for allowing trade and work on the Sabbath, for such disobedience to God's law had brought condemnation upon them as a nation before. He proceeded to order the city gates closed on the sacred day and his personal warning to the traders who lingered near, caused them to leave. He commanded the Levites to enforce this reform.

The disgraceful neglect of the Temple services and the ministers was also perceived by Nehemiah and again with vigor he strove to change things. The Levites and the singers had been forced to leave their duties and make a living from the soil. Nehemiah shamed the people for allowing this, and gathering in the tithe, and he appointed four men to distribute it fairly. Zedek, the scribe was one of these. It is interesting to note here that this regulation was a departure from the old law, for according to it the tithe was to be used for a great feast for the donors.<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah further made rules for the work of the Priests and Levites, organized tithing, and appointed certain times for offerings.

All but one of the articles subscribed to by the great assembly under Ezra are suggested in the reforms of Nehemiah, and it seems logical to place him first. Kent holds this opinion and feels that Nehemiah and not Ezra was the great reformer. The chronicler, being of priestly viewpoint, gave Ezra, the Priest, credit when possible.

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Good defence for this opinion follows: "In the light of conditions in Judah before the advent of Nehemiah, it is impossible to believe that all that was necessary to influence the Jews of Palestine to give up customs and religious practices cherished for centuries, to reform fundamentally their religious and social practices, to expel from their homes many beloved wives and children, and to subscribe almost unanimously to a new code, was that a deputation of Jews from the east visit them with the new law in their hands., read it in their presence, and then forthwith convene a great assembly for the purpose of promulgating it."<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of who was responsible for the great changes that took place in Judah about this time, the all-important fact remains that there was a priestly reformation which ultimately revolutionized the character of Palestinian Judaism. Even, though most of the articles of the law established by Ezra seem not to have been original with him, still his importance is not to be under-rated. The added emphasis he gave to the reforms by embodying them in a book of law or a code and then by persuasion rather than force, gaining the public sanction and pledge of fidelity to it, laid the firm foundation upon which Judaism was built. The work of Nehemiah made it possible for Ezra's appeals to arouse the public conscience to take

1. Kent. p. 193.



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the definite stand they did in the great assembly. Let us look more fully into the details of Ezra's work.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, the Priest Ezra of the Jewish exile and a band of followers came from Babylon with the "Book of the Law of Moses", and power to administer it in Palestine. For a period of years, Ezra worked to prepare the people for the establishing of the new law, so that finally in the twentieth year at the gathering we call the Great Assembly, he was able to expel foreign wives and children and by popular vote the people's allegiance was pledged to the new code. In order to accomplish this Ezra appealed to force in the matter of compulsory attendance at this gathering, the penalty for absence being the loss of one's property and expulsion from the congregation.

There are many theories as to the nature of this book of law brought by Ezra. Some think it was a product of the Babylonian exile and was written by Ezra himself. Others contend that the sources were older than that, but were united in new form during that period. Another theory holds that Ezra collected all the writings after Deuteronomy and that they form the three middle books of Pentateuch. Others think that Ezra was a representative of the Babylonian circles who composed the Priestly Code, the content of which was the narrative strand of the old law brought down to the time of the exile and reunited



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with the law. Still another opinion is that Ezra joined the old law with the Priestly Code and that the people subscribed loyalty to the Pentateuch, as well as to the new law.

Whatever the origin of Ezra's book may have been, we can be sure of its priestly nature by noticing the chief articles subscribed to, by the Great Assembly. (1) All marriages with non-Jews were declared abolished for both the present and the future. (2) The people pledged not to indulge in Sabbath-day trade. (3) The Sabbatical year was to be observed, which meant that crops were given and debts were cancelled for the seventh year. New obligations were: (4) One third of a shekel was to be given as poll tax for the public cultus; (5) the first fruits or the first born of animals were to supply the needs of the Temple priests; (6) according to the decision by lot, the families pledged to give wood for sacrifices; (7) the tithe from crops was to be used by the Levites as directed by the law, and (8) in general the people were willing to make any other necessary provisions for the Temple services. It is significant to note that, with the exception of the regulation concerning intermarriage, all of the articles have to do with the ritual, or worship-life of the people.

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The above being the establishing of this priestly law further show the new trend that was reaching nature

development in the Jewish religion at this time. Above all else the priestly code was intended to separate the Jews from all other peoples. To accomplish this the abolition of intermarriage was essential, of course, but this purpose was further realized by the establishing of distinctive and peculiar religious customs and ritual to the extent that a Jew would be known as such under all circumstances. This may not have been a conscious aim of those who worked to establish the new law, but their immediate aims of improving social organization, of making more impressive temple services which necessitated an increased and definite income for temple ministers, and of making objective the principles of the prophets, resulted in the peculiar practices which marked a Jew wherever he was found.

The task of early Judaism was not only to prevent relations with non-Jews but was also to give the people a definite guide to the doing of God's will. The disasters of the exile had proved to the Jews--whether they were carried away captive or left to suffer the misfortunes at home--that somehow their relation to God had not been as it should have been or else Jehovah's chosen people would not have had to suffer as they did. For a long period of time after the exile there seemed to be no way to regain God's favor, and as a result morals degen-



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erated, national pride waned, and foreign dealings and marriages crept into the lives of the Jews. Then the work of Nehemiah and Ezra opened the people's eyes. Gradually they came to see that their way of living was wrong, that they were still Jehovah's chosen people, and best of all that there was a way to regain God's favor. In the priestly law they found just what seemed to be the thing they needed and had needed before, a definite guide to the doing of God's will. So we see the New Law accomplished a two-fold purpose: to make a barrier between Jew and Gentile and to guide in daily living. The former may be said to be static, while the latter is dynamic. In the functioning of the law as a guide to conduct lies the cause of development, and the secret of the power and success of Judaism.

The idea of attempting to prevent relations with non-Jews especially through intermarriage was not all new with the Priestly Code. It was in the old law.<sup>1</sup> It was taught by the prophets.<sup>2</sup> Pericles passed a law that only a child of two Athenian parents was an Athenian. But it was peculiar with the Jews in that it was done solely for the sake of religion. Their previous laxity had resulted in the downfall of their nation and to them the only hope of their preservation lay in the preservation

1. Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:3f.  
2. Ezra 9:11.



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of their religion which necessitated the shutting out of foreign influences. The insight that fostered this is surely to be admired. Such laws as those pertaining to the clean and unclean had the effect of making intercourse with the heathen harder, but these laws are so old and their origins so complicated that it would be impossible to prove that they were established for that purpose.

In the establishing of the priestly code we find the origin of the Judaism of Jesus' day. Whether the <sup>the</sup> change in religion of the people which made this new law possible was abrupt or gradual does not matter, but the important thing for us is that the change took place and that it resulted in Judaism. The free and joyous religion of the ancient Hebrews, who felt that Jehovah, their tribal God, was very near to them, was to be replaced by a religion of ritual and ceremony in which God was a holy, separate, and universal God looking to his chosen people to carry out his purpose in the world, which they could only do by preserving their religion and giving it to others. In the words of Kuenen, "There (i.e. before Ezra) the spirit ruled, here(after him) the letter; there the free word, here the scripture. The outstanding figure of the preceding centuries was the prophet; after Ezra his place was taken by the scribe." <sup>1</sup>

As we read the New Testament we are sure to be impressed with the fact that a bitter hatred existed between



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religion of the ancient Hebrews, who felt that Jehovah  
their tribal God, was very near to them, was to be re-  
placed by a religion of ritual and ceremony in which God  
was a holy, separate, and distant God looking to his  
chosen people to carry out his purpose in the world.  
When they could only do by preserving their religion  
and giving it to others. In the words of Kuenen, "There  
(i.e. before Burn) the spirit ruled, afterwards the  
letter; there the tree word, here the word-tree. The old-  
standing figure of the preceding centuries was the  
prophet; after Burn his place was taken by the priest."  
As we read the New Testament we are sure to be im-  
pressed with the fact that a bitter hatred existed between



the Jews and the Samaritans. These peoples were very closely related by blood for they were both originally in the old kingdom of Israel. Then came the division of the Kingdom and in the rivalry between the north and the south lies the first cause for hatred between these brother races. After the fall of Israel came the fusion of heathen blood due to the colonies sent by the Assyrian kings into Samaria. Along with this came varying external expressions of their religion which at first had been identical to that of the people of Judah. The attempt of King Josiah to unify these peoples failed because the modes of expressing their religion were so vastly different that unity was impossible. When Nehemiah undertook to bring about his reforms, he felt that the Jews were too weak to assimilate the Samaritans and therefore the only way to keep the Jewish religion pure was to bar the Samaritans from Jerusalem. It happened that the daughter of Sanballat, the leader of Samaria was married to a grandson of the High Priest. Nehemiah drove the couple from Jerusalem and thus aroused bitter antagonism.

This incident brought the growing hatred to <sup>a</sup> crisis in what is called the Samaritan Schism. Previous to this time, the Samaritans as well as the Jews had accepted Jerusalem as the chosen place of God for his abode, in spite of the fact that Shechem, and not Jerusalem was the place to be blessed of God according to the old scriptures. The former had long been recognized as a public high place where those who could <sup>not</sup> go to Jerusalem could



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worship. The event of the High Priest's grandson, Manasseh, being driven from Jerusalem gave the Samaritans ample opportunity to break away from the old custom and to establish, with the permission of the Persian king, a temple on Mount Gerazim, which they claimed to be the sacred abode of God, rather than Jerusalem. Manasseh was made high priest and the Pentateuch was established as the law. One can imagine the feeling to which this outrage gave rise in Jerusalem, and consequently understand why the Samaritans were so bitterly despised by the Jews. But besides arousing hatred, the Samaritan Schism resulted in definite advantages for both Samaria and Judah. The Jews were left unmolested in their country to devote their energies to the observance and study of the law. The Samaritans received a new religious zeal because they had a temple of their own. They did not revert to heathenism, but adopted a Jewish code of the Pentateuch for their law and this plus the book of Joshua formed their scriptures.<sup>1.</sup> Because they rejected the prophets and later Jewish scriptures and developed nothing in their places, not even an effective study of the law, their religion did not stand the test of the ages as did that of the Jews.

The close of the Persian rule (fourth century B. C.) found Judaism pretty well established. It did not come from Babylonia but was a normal and fruitive growth on Palestinian soil. However, it was the influences of the

1. Kent, page 266.



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period of the exile, which opened so many opportunities for progress and change, and thus made possible its rapid development. A summary of the factors which made Judaism will be helpful here.

Undoubtedly the tendency to make religion a law was strongly developed before the exile. Also, the principles and purposes for which Judaism was made, were those of the pre-exilic prophets. Nevertheless the remarkable conditions of the period of the exile were the immediate forces which caused the growth of Judaism. The overthrow of the state left the Jews free to devote all their time to religion. Carried away captive to a foreign land, the literary habits and religious zeal of their conquerors, were forced upon the attention of the Jews and doubtless had their influence upon them. Lovely temples, wealthy priests, and fascinating ritual would naturally be the envy of the exiles as they thought of how their beloved Temple at Jerusalem had been ruthlessly destroyed, and how they had been deprived of all that was sacred to them. Again, their doubts and fears made them turn away from the old faith which seemed to have failed and they found a refuge in the externals of religion. The conditions of the exile threw them more forcefully and directly into the temptation of submitting to the heathen cults. This made it more necessary to have an objective religion.



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So to the ignorant masses, it was a great relief to accept a dictated system of action which was detailed, plain, and had authority. Such a religion gave them a feeling of assurance that they were doing the will of God without a doubt. Further the smallness and compactness of the Jewish community was very favorable to the new religion and thus fostered its development. The fact that the Persian rulers, in the period following the exile, advocated so liberal a religious policy was a great encouragement to the Jewish subjects to strive to make their religion effective, as they wanted it to be. Mention has already been made of the importance of the work of Nehemiah and Ezra to Judaism. The opposition of the Samaritans forced the Jews to draw more closely together and thus they gained unity and strength. Also the Samaritan Schism proved to be a sifting process, for the Jews who would not subscribe to the new law naturally turned to the Samaritan religion, leaving the Jewish faith the most loyal of adherents. Another element favorable to Judaism was the sympathy, reverence and contributions of the Jews outside of Judea. This encouraged the Jews at home and renewed their efforts to make the law effective. The last factor which strengthened Judaism is really considered a product of the Greek period and will be treated later, but it must also be mentioned here, for it is the final



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test of a religious faith and if that faith can be victor in the end, then it will stand through ages. I speak of persecution.

Before taking up the Greek period of Jewish history, it will be profitable to consider the organization of Judaism at the close of Persian period. The priesthood was as old as the nation. The first king was also high priest. The state was the church then. As secular nobility waned, the priests gained in prestige as did also the Temple. Until the middle of the Persian period, civil officers functioned in the affairs of the community. In the time of Nehemiah these were still recognized, but along beside them was growing a priestly aristocracy which was beginning to overshadow them. The Priestly Code centered both civil and religious functions in one person, the high priest. He had all the powers of a royal king, was anointed, wore purple, and bore a crown. No royal honor was denied him. The old nobility occupied the petty offices in his court. The church was the state. The only limitations to the power of the high priest were foreign rulers and the will of the masses if they should revolt.

Under the high priest there was a great body of carefully graded corps of temple ministers. The responsibilities and duties of all the ranks of priests



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were minutely defined in the Priestly Code. Of course, the most desirable offices were held by the members of the high priest's family and thus a priestly aristocracy was formed. The priests were divided into twenty-four classes or courses, which a little later, served in rotation at the Temple for at least one week. According to the Chronicler's census in the second chapter of Ezra, the priests formed a large proportion of the population.

The chief duties of the priests were to present to Jehovah the various offerings of the people which constituted an important part of the temple ritual. According to the Priestly Code, they alone were qualified to perform this service. They were supposed to live as holy as their task and so the tasting of wine, the shaving of their heads or beards, or any other act which would make them unclean was forbidden. Only those of perfect physique were allowed to enter an office of the priesthood. At about the age of twenty a youth solemnly took the vows and was anointed priest. The idea of a holy nation of priests underlies the institution, but in time holiness became so strictly defined that the masses of people were barred because of their occupations. Thus the duty of the priests was to represent the people to God and at the same time to guard the temple from profanation by



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by contact with anything that was not ceremonially clean.

Previous to the priestly reformation, the Priests and Levites together formed the tribe of Levi, but the Priestly Code drew a sharp distinction between the two, claiming as a basis for the distinction a difference in ancestry; the legitimate priests being the sons of Aaron. However, the historical facts do not substantiate such a discrimination but, rather, the legitimate priests were the descendants of the pre-exilic Temple priests while those called Levites were the sons of the priests who ministered in the high places before the reform of Josiah. Because their fathers had encouraged the people in what the more pious Jews considered gross apostasy, these "Levites" were given the menial tasks in the Temple and were the servants of the priests and the sanctuary. Theoretically they were given to the priests by the people in exchange for the first born in the homes which belonged to God. Being excluded from the high offices and not allowed in the inner sanctuary or near the altar, their work took the form of cleaning, caring for the vessels, preparing the showbread, and opening and closing doors. Their pay was very uncertain and naturally their number had greatly diminished until Nehemiah's reform improved conditions and rallied more into the ranks. There were three types



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of Levites, those doing general temple service, the musicians and the doorkeepers.

Still another class of people was connected with the Temple. They were called the Nethinim, "the given". Probably they were the descendants of slaves originally given to the Temple; accordingly to their lots fell the most menial tasks. They lived in permanent quarters near the Temple. There were three hundred ninety-two such temple slaves in Ezra's census.

An essential element in the establishment of the Priestly Code was the work of the scribes. Previous to the writings of the Son of Sirach there is no record of the origin and work of the scribes. At the time in which Sirach lived the scribes were a class of professional men. They were not necessarily priests, although they may have taken many of their interpretations from the priesthood. Sirach was not a priest but was a member of a lay class of Bible students and teachers of the written or unwritten law.

As to the history of the scribes previous to the time<sup>of</sup> Sirach our conclusions must be conjectures but surely it is not presumptuous to suggest that they originated because of the law interpretation after the establishment of the Priestly Code. After the people accepted the law, questions arose as to its meaning or application in par-



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From their work as copyists of the Holy Scriptures, they were given the name of Sopherim or Scribes. If the people were to know and follow the law, it was necessary that many copies should be made of it, that those who wished to follow the law might have access to it. This phase of the scribal work is not to <sup>be</sup> underestimated, for writing in those days was not so simple as it is in our day and only the learned could do it. Undoubtedly the scribes are to be credited with much work in the editing and preserving of the Hebrew scriptures, especially of the Pentateuch.

The scribes were also the theologians of their time. Their task of interpreting the law made it necessary that they be diligent Bible students and as a result of this, they, and not the priests, were henceforth to exercise the controlling influence upon Jewish religious life.

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But the scribes' work was not limited to copying and studying the scriptures. Perhaps their greatest field of



activity was that of jurisprudence. The heart of the law was the administration of justice, but in order to have justice it was necessary to adapt the law to the needs of that day. So it became the business of the scribes to deduce from the law the proper course to pursue in any given emergency. The conclusions thus reached were what were termed the traditional law. At first it was entirely oral, but after a time some of it was committed to writing and became so highly prized that it was even traced back to Moses. Theoretically, this body of tradition was not supposed to go beyond the exposition and application of the written law, but in reality it became a development and expansion of it. At first the scribes were not concerned with points of ritual but gradually they assumed that added authority and finally came to regulate priestly practices. Thus, as the jurists of their time, the scribes held no small place of authority.

Beyond the sphere of the law, the scribes extended their energies to the elaboration of the narrative portion of the sacred text. In this field they were not restricted or bound by the law, so they introduced what seemed necessary to make the story fit their day. The Chronicler's treatment of the older history illustrates this point. Not only historical data, but moral and religious aspects were modified as they pleased. Through this department of their work, the scribes greatly influence-



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ed the religious thinking of the people.

The scribes were not only the theologians, the legalists, and the writers of their day, but also the teachers. People must know the law before they can obey it. The goal of the scribal teaching was to impress upon the memories of the pupils, the content of the law; thus an ideal disciple was the one "like a well of chalk which loses not a drop of water."<sup>1</sup> At first these classes met on the Porch of the Temple. Of course, with the growth of the synagogues, the scribes worked in the institutional schools. Further consideration will be given to these later.

By the beginning of the Greek period the scribes were not only a learned order, but they were organized into professional guilds with headquarters at Jerusalem and representatives in every locality. In disputed matters they loyally accepted the decision of the majority so that their teachings were uniform and their powers unweakened by division. In later centuries, discord crept in as is represented by the disputes of Shamai and Hillel.<sup>2</sup> The scribes were held in the highest respect and esteem, and their advice was eagerly sought by all in difficulty. The priests and the aristocrats bowed to their authority. As representatives of the law, their aim was to make its supremacy real. The idea underlying all their activity

1. Fairweather-The Background of the Gospels p. 69.

2. Ibid. p. 375.



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was that the law was the commandment of God and that every Jew was, therefore, under obligation to obey it in every particular. But to do this it was necessary to have the aid of a skilled knowledge of the law. This, the scribes strove to supply. Religion became a fine art and only with the guide of an expert could an ordinary Jew hope to follow the 613 commandments of the written law besides the Oral Tradition.

The institutions of Judaism at the close of the Persian period were the direct antecedents of those found in Jesus' day.

When Ezra came to establish the law, he called the people together into what we call the Great Assembly. By popular vote, new pledges and obligations were taken by the people. It is most likely that out of this grew the Great Synagogue. Our knowledge of this institution is very limited and thus our conclusions must necessarily be from inference to a great extent. In the older texts it seems that there were about one hundred twenty members. We have no way of knowing how the members were chosen, but it appears that they were closely identified with the scribes. The organization was not as definite as that of the Sanhedrin in later years. It seems to have been simply a collective teaching authority which had continual existence for a period of years. It was probably in this assembly



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that the discussions and decisions on disputed matters were made which determined the teachings of the scribes. It may be also that this body perscribed the curriculum for the three main branches of Jewish learning, the Midrash, the Halakah and the Haggadah. Moore suggests that the motto of the Great Synagogue was: "Be deliberate in giving judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a barrier about the law."<sup>1</sup> During the Greek period this institution disappeared, probably due to the coming of hellenism and divisions among the teachers.

It seems likely that it was in the Great Synagogue that the pairs of colleagues, as the highest authorities on tradition, began to serve. Jose ben Jo'ezer of Seredah and Jose ben Johanan of Jerusalem were the first pair. The three succeeding pairs served over 125 years. Shemaiah and Abtalion were the most highly reputed heads of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the earlier part of the reign of Herod (34-4 B. C.). Simeon ben Shatah was active under Alexander Jannaeus and his successor Queen Alexandra<sup>2</sup> who is said to have been Simeon's sister. Shammai and Hillel were the last of the pairs to serve. If this custom was originated in the Great Synagogue, it seems to have outlived the latter institution and was carried on independently afterwards.

By far the most important factor which enabled Judaism

1. Moore p. 33.

2. Moore p. 45



that the circumstances and decisions on disputed matters were made which determined the teaching of the scribers. It may be also that this body prescribed the curriculum for the three main branches of Jewish learning, the Mishnah, the Halakha and the Hagada. Moore suggests that the motto of the Great Synagogue was: "We deliberate in giving judgment, and raise up many decisions, and make a barrier about the law." During the Greek period this institution disappeared, probably due to the coming of Hellenism and divisions among the teachers.

It seems likely that it was in the Great Synagogue that the pairs of colleagues, as the highest authorities on tradition, began to serve. Jose ben Jo'sar of Gerash and Jose ben Johanan of Jerusalem were the first pair. The three succeeding pairs served over 125 years. Shemaiah and Abtalion were the most highly reputed heads of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the earlier part of the reign of Herod (37-4 B. C.). Simon ben Shaton was active under Alexander Jannaeus and his successor (103-76 B. C.) who is said to have been Simon's sister. Shammai and Hillel were the last of the pairs to serve. If this custom was originated in the Great Synagogue, it seems to have continued the latter institution and was carried on independently afterwards.

By far the most important factor which enabled Judaism



to grip an entire race was the synagogue. We have already suggested how it originated as a result of the needs of the people of the exile; but the rebuilding of the Temple and the establishing of the new law did not lessen the function or value of the synagogue. On the contrary, its importance was greatly increased by the new religious order. It was the only institution which ministered to the daily and weekly needs of the people and such ministration was essential if the law was to be successful. The synagogue was the layman's institution--friendly and neighborly in fellowship. The people had a part in the ritual such as the reading of the scripture. Not only did the synagogue function successfully as a place for public worship, but its greatest value lay in its contribution to mass education. There was very little organization to the synagogue school and any man who was able was allowed to teach, but of course, that task fell chiefly to the scribes who were the professional teachers and who wished to use the synagogue to promote the learning of the law. The details of the functioning of this institution as church and school will be considered more fully later in this thesis, but suffice it to say here that the synagogue of the Persian period was growing rapidly in numbers and efficiency.

The Temple was the institution of national significance. It had behind it the prestige of the ages since the time of Solomon. The beautiful building, the full sacrifice and elaborate ritual were the pride of every Jew. Under the new



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Priestly Code the organization of the Temple and its services was more detailed and impressive than ever before. The experience of the exile and the destruction of the Temple made the Jews appreciate it more than ever; at least after their consciences were aroused by the appeals of Nehemiah and Ezra. Their loyalty to the Jerusalem Temple was undoubtedly strengthened by the opposition aroused by the Samaritan Schism. God's abode was in their midst and as they strove to observe the new law, they felt assured of that fact, which to them meant regaining favor in the sight of God.

During the centuries following the Priestly reformation, the life of the Jewish people was not a burden but a joy. Although ruled by foreigners, the law had no rival and with whole-hearted zeal they atoned for their previous national sins. The impressive Temple services, the democratic spirit of the synagogue and the instruction gladly and faithfully received from the scribes pointed the people to the way of righteousness. As a class the religious leaders were zealous, sincere and devout. The new demands of the law filled their lives with what seemed to them useful activity. Many of the Psalms which are a product of this period reflect the deep popular love for the law which found expression in joyous living.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt but that Judaism in its early form, was a healthful and attractive type of religious life which encouraged individual responsibility and expanded knowledge. In the words of Kent, "To the great majority, the observation

1. Psalms 84:1,2; 119:1,34,35,97.



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of the commands of the law was a glad privilege, and in faithful obedience to that which to them was the will of God, they doubtless enjoyed a rich blessing."<sup>1</sup>

The Greek Period of Jewish History and its

Effect on Judaism.

The Greek period of Jewish history was introduced by the conquest of Palestine by Alexander in 332 B. C. Life in the Jewish community was changed very little by the new ruler; but Alexander's successors were not so strong as he and the Egyptians rule was not so favorable to the Jews. Then followed a period of years during which the Jews were the prey of both the Egyptians and Syrians who were contesting the rule of Judah. All was turmoil and unrest. During this period of rapidly changing monarchs, strife and uncertainty, Jewish thought was developing along certain definite lines. Let us consider these before going farther into the history of the period.

Fighting and conquest on the parts of their rulers and suffering on their own parts, could not but result in a group of blood-thirsty Jews. They held a narrow nationalistic view and hoped by bloody revenge to overthrow the ruling nations and gain political as well as religious freedom. It was this class of thinkers who eagerly rallied to rebel whenever a leader gave the call.

Another attitude held by many was that of the ritualistic party. Their only concern was for the law and the Temple.

1. Kent p. 251.



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They cared not what happened to the heathen so long as the Temple and its services remained undisturbed. Ceremonial details were more important in their estimation than the rise and fall of nations.

It was in this period that there developed among the middle class, a group of teachers called wisemen. They lacked the inspiration and ideals of the prophets but came closer to the daily life of the people. God was a universal God in their idea, but before His Kingdom could be established all of Israel's enemies must be destroyed. Gradually the wisemen became identified with the scribes and as a result wisdom and law became one. Moses was made the father of wisdom as well as of law. This fusion enriched the works of the scribes by introducing fables into them. Proverbs and epigrams were also added. As a class, the wisemen were of a temperate morality--not altruistic, but faithful to a friend at any cost. Almsgiving was practiced because it was considered a duty. The aspirations of the nationalists did not appeal to them. They were orthodox and revered the law. It is in the writings of this group that we find a skeptical pessimism which was the natural result of the calamities of the times.

There was no current of thought that came so near to undermining the very foundation of Judaism as did that of the Hellenists. Greek was the business and social language of the times. Greek art and Greek manners were the standards. If



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one hoped to gain wealth or political preferment he must first be hellenized. Many tried to compromise and go two ways; they tried to cling to the faith of their fathers and still accept Greek customs and ideas. Many of the priests were hellenists. Others entirely abandoned Judaism and went wholeheartedly into Greek indulgence and immorality. They tried to conceal their Jewish antecedents. Some of the youths who had joined the Greek gymnasium even underwent operations in an effort to cover the blemishes of circumcision for which they were ridiculed by bystanders. It seemed that the whole nation was plunging head-long into Hellenism and the very foundations of Judaism were weakening and soon would collapse. There was only one reason that this party did not succeed in entirely undermining Judaism and that was because the leaders were too extreme and sudden in their acts of hellenizing which resulted in a serious crisis, arousing the champions of the law to defense. The Persian period was the era of the formation and development of Judaism while the Greek period proved to be the testing time.

In the midst of hellenization which was to be found in Jerusalem when Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) became ruler of Judea (168 B.C.), the high priest, Onias III was sincerely attempting to follow the law of Judaism. The court of Antiochus was in Antioch, which soon developed into a beautiful Greek city under the program of the new ruler, who was a lover of beauty and luxury. He was also unscrupulous, morally, and merciless when enraged. So it was entirely in keep-



one hopes to gain wealth or political prominence he must first be hellenized. Many tried to compromise and go two ways; they tried to cling to the faith of their fathers and still accept Greek customs and ideas. Many of the priests were hellenized. Others entirely abandoned Judaism and went wholeheartedly into Greek idolatry and immorality. They tried to connect their Jewish antecedents with some of the youths who had joined the Greek gymnasiums even underwent operations in an effort to cover the blotches of circumcision for which they were ridiculed by Hellenes. It seemed that the whole nation was plunging head-long into Hellenism and the very foundations of Judaism were weakening and soon would collapse. There was only one reason that this party did not succeed in entirely abandoning Judaism and that was because the leaders were too extreme and when in their acts of hellenizing which resulted in a serious crisis, arousing the champions of the law to defend. The Persian period was the era of the formation and development of Judaism while the Greek period proved to be the testing time. In the midst of hellenization which was to be found in Jerusalem when Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) became ruler of Judea (168 B.C.), the high priest, Simon III was sincerely attempting to follow the law of Judaism. The court of Antiochus was in Antioch, which soon developed into a beautiful Greek city under the program of the new ruler, who was a lover of beauty and luxury. He was also unscrupulous, selfish, and merciless when enraged. So it was entirely in keep-



ing with his character that he gave the office of high priest to Jason when the latter offered money for it and further paid for the privilege of establishing a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem. Jason did all in his power to hellenize the city. To show his stand he sent a large gift to Tyre during the tournament of Greek games held there, which was to be dedicated to a Greek god. But Antiochus cared nothing for Jason and when Menelaus came to his court boldly making greater offers of hellenization, he in turn received the appointment of high priest. Returning to Jerusalem he was forced to fight for the office but Jason was finally forced to flee. In order to meet his pledge to the king the new priest began stripping the Temple of valuable treasures, to which acts, the ex-priest Onias dared to protest. As result the latter was treacherously assassinated by an agent of Menelaus. While the high priest continued his hellenization, the king Antiochus IV went to war in Egypt. Returning defeated, he took his vengeance on Jerusalem like a spoiled child, by stripping the Holy Place in the Temple. Jewish hearts must have been greatly stirred by such actions but they were helpless. Then came a second invasion of Egypt (168 B. C.) and this time he was ordered out by Rome. Infuriated, he again gave vent to his feelings by simply tearing the houses and walls of Jerusalem into pieces. Political reasons also prompted his actions for he could not afford to have such a strong city in the hands of an opposing population when Rome's enmity was aroused. He gathered a group of his faithful<sup>followers</sup> and built and fortified a



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small city just outside the bounds of the former city. The Temple was converted into the worship of Zeus, and all the Jewish cultus was destroyed. "Unclean" swine were sacrificed on the sacred altars, and any observance or possession of the Jewish law was forbidden under penalty of death. Submitting to a heathen sacrifice was established as a test of loyalty.

The effect of such an outrage upon the heart of every loyal Jew can readily be imagined. Those who had previously tried to compromise between Greek and Jewish life were now forced to choose between the two. Of course, the weaker ones would fearfully submit to the conditions to save their own lives. But the Jews as a whole were very devout, and loyal to what they thought was right and many of them suffered death rather than meet such requirements. The Jews had faced many times of hardship and disaster, but never before had the test been so brutal, so severe, and so challenging.

Every crisis calls forth a leader and in the present situation, Judas Maccabaeus rallied to the defense of Judaism. With his four brothers, and under the leadership of his father, Matthias of the priestly house called Hasmonians, a guerilla warfare was started against the Syrians. At the father's death Judas took leadership, roving through the country, destroying the heathen altars, circumcising children, and harrying those who had submitted to the decrees of the king. The Syrians under the Regent Lysias underestimated the strength of Judas' band and as the latter gained victories, new followers found and joined them. In time they were able to take and



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rededicate the Temple. The old worship was again established. In the meantime Antiochus had met his death warring in the East, and the regent Lysias, convinced that Judaism could not be rooted out, granted the Jews religious freedom. But Judas was not yet satisfied and with his band went out to relieve oppressed Jews in other localities. Later he besieged the citadel of Jerusalem, and in turn was besieged in the Temple. Finally Judas was slain in battle, and the Temple fortifications were removed, but religious freedom was again granted by Lysias. The brothers of Judas took advantage of their position and Simon became recognized as high priest and virtually ruler of Judea.

The period from 135-76 B. C. was one of continual warfare. The motive at first was purely religious, as a result of the persecution of Antiochus. But war did not cease with the gaining of religious freedom and the motive for fighting came to be independence and finally conquest. Rivalry over the kingship or priesthood filled the decades that followed Judas the Maccabee.

The crisis which was reached in the persecution of Antiochus IV had very definite effects on the Jewish people and their religion. In the first place, the acts of Antiochus in his base defilement of the Temple and all that was sacred to every Jew, as well as the contempt which prompted them, could result in nothing less than the bitterest hostility toward heathenism in the heart of every loyal Jew. Many of their countrymen had chosen death in preference to submission



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to a despised heathen sacrifice. The hatred of those who had escaped making the choice, did not lose intensity with time. Under such circumstances it was impossible for them to feel that their God was also the God of him who was so brutally oppressing God's people and God's law. Thus, the crisis had a decided demoralizing effect on Judaism.

In the second place the Jews were left a divided people. All were not in sympathy with Judas. Men in good positions and circumstances had too much to sacrifice. It was easier for them to submit to the rule that existed and retain their prestige. Another group which opposed Judas was the High Priest and his followers, and their fears were well grounded for Judas' brothers did usurp the high priest-hood.

A third division of the people during this crisis was called the Asideans. They rallied to the support of Judas in an effort to defend the law, and when religious liberty was no longer the issue for which they were fighting, they withdrew their support from him. In spite of the fact that the Jewish community was thus divided into factions, the line of scholars remained unbroken down to the reign of Herod when Shammai and Hillel, the last of the pairs of colleagues, were in authority.

Undoubtedly the greatest positive benefit of the crisis was that it saved Judaism from hellenization. The extreme measures of the rulers in attempting to introduce Greek ideas and customs aroused the champions of the law to its defense. Had the crisis not come, the hellenizing influences would



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have gradually continued and Judaism would soon have lost its identity, if it had not been entirely obliterated. Of course, it is true that Judaism was saved by a war-time enthusiasm and loyalty, which in time resulted in a stricter barrier than ever around the law. A religion cannot gain much by war but in this case the persecution came just at the time when Judaism seemed to be waning, and the fact that they had a religion worth sacrifice, awakened the people to its defense. Thus the roots of the Jewish religion were planted deeply in the hearts of the people, and because it stood the testing, it gained added strength to stand the test of the ages.

During the second century prior to the Christian era, there grew up on Alexandrian soil a combination of Greek thought and Jewish religion known as the Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy. This school of thought reached its climax and highest expression in the writings of Philo. Beyond a doubt, these teachings remotely influenced the Judaism of Jesus' day and so it will be well to briefly consider them.

This philosophy grew up as the result of repeated attempts to fuse and harmonize Judaism and Hellenism. The Jew concluded that there must be a divine revelation independent of philosophy; and thus they looked upon the Hebrew faith as the inspiration of Greek philosophy. To prove their position they resorted to alleg<sup>o</sup>ry in interpreting the scriptures. As Wernle said, "Allegory becomes the connecting link between the Jewish word and the Greek spirit." Though none of the writings of



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I. Philo-Jesus and the Hellenic. p. 175.  
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Philo have been preserved completely, still they are our chief source of knowledge concerning this school of thought.<sup>1A.</sup>

One of his three works on the Pentateuch is particularly interesting because it shows so well his aim to better enable Jew and Greek to understand each other. This work is a popular digest of Mosaic law for pagan readers, the first section of which shows how the law of Moses concerning creation conforms to nature.<sup>1.</sup> These writings are characterized by abstract and florid terms. They show no originality, lack a historic sense and are indifferent to facts. Exaggerated and fantastic moralizing takes the place of an appreciation of the natural and simple meaning of the scriptures. All the new ideas of the Greek period were loosely combined with a mystic veneration for Judaism and the ancient writings. There was a thorough loyalty to Judaism, but Plato and Aristotle were used as a means to a better conception of the old faith and an aid to its defense and wider spread. Philo wrote: "We accept death with joy, as if we were receiving immortality, rather than allow any of the customs of our ancestors to be touched."<sup>2</sup>

With the intellect from the Greeks and vitality from the Jews the Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy arrived at some rather high religious conceptions. The idea of God was more philosophical than that of the early Hebrews. The personal conception of God was combined with the Platonic doctrine of "ideas". In other words, "ideas" dwelt in a distinct person-

1A. Fairweather- Jesus and the Greeks p. 168.

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2. Ibid. p. 167.



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1A. Peirce-Weir- Jones and the Greeks p. 166.  
1. Peirce-Weir- Jones and the Greeks p. 166.  
2. Philo, p. 167.



ality--God. The qualities of that Personality were divine and not human, thus the writers tried to avoid all language in the scriptures which attributed human characteristics to God. This separateness of God called for<sup>a</sup> doctrine of intermediaries. Logos was a second God, identical with wisdom, through whom God would free man's soul from his body. God was considered perfect, free, and unchangeable transcending the world. Being the source and reason of all good, he was without limitation. Man's nature was dualistic. The body as the prison of the soul was not bad but merely irrational. The aim of life was to gain freedom of the soul from the body. This doctrine differed from that of the Stoics in that God's aid was necessary to accomplish the end. Mysticism entered in, also, since it was thought that mortal and immortal could not dwell together, therefore an unconscious state was a prerequisite to seeing God. High moral and religious ideals were also included in these teachings. Vices were recognized and strongly combatted. God is pictured as a father. Lofty ideals of self-sacrifice and true riches in Heaven make an earthly Messianic hope unnecessary.<sup>1</sup> Fairweather has gone so far as to say that this philosophy resulted in, "the highest religious literature uninspired by Christianity"

#### The Rise of Religious Groups in Judaism.

In Hebrew the name Pharisee is "Perisha" which is derived from the verb "perash" meaning "separated". A Pharisee is "one who is separated". Separated from whom or from what

1. Fairweather-Jesus and the Greeks. p. 172.



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 I. Fellowship-Jews and the Greeks, p. 173.



is unknown. From what is known of the Pharisees later, it is commonly ~~inferred~~ that the name was given them because they were so diligent in avoiding all things that were declared unclean by the law, and all persons whom they considered less careful in that matter than they. The definition given in the Talmud which was written later than the Christian era is "a Pharisee is one who separates himself from all uncleanness and from eating anything unclean".<sup>1</sup> Another idea as to how this group received its name is that they were scornfully called Pharisees by those who resented their attitude of self-righteousness and then later the name was adopted by the group itself, as happened in the case of the Methodists. Again it may have been chosen by the group as a more appropriate name than "Holy"; "Holy" and "separate" were synonymous characteristics respectively of God and man. Still another theory is that the name was applied to the group of Asidaeans who withdrew from Judas Maccabaeus when religious freedom was gained and a legitimate high priest was secured. The name of Pharisee may also be interpreted to mean "distinguished" or "expressed distinctly", and so, there are some who think that this group was so-called because of their ability to make such precise and minute interpretations of the law. Herford<sup>2</sup> suggests still another theory. The name Pharisee was first mentioned in the reign of John Hyrcanus, (135-105 B. C.) son of Simon of the house of the Hasmonians. At that time the high priest made an appeal to the people to better observe the

1. Moore p. 60.

2. Herford-The Pharisees p. 34.



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tithes and rules of cleanliness found in the Torah. As a result an association was formed for that purpose, and four grades of membership were established according to the strictness of the pledge taken by the members. The Pharisees's pledge was the least strict and one had to fulfill the lowest obligations before he could take a higher vow. Thus the Pharisees were the largest class in the association and were next to the common people. If this were true it seems strange to the author that we hear nothing about the other classes in such an association. Moore suggests that the Pharisees were probably the successors of Hasidim the Pious. <sup>1</sup> In the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes <sup>many</sup> let themselves and children be killed rather than fight on the Sabbath. Fighting in self-defense was later allowed on the Sabbath day.

Regardless of the fact that the origin of the Pharisees remains an uncertainty as far as we are concerned, there are points regarding the nature of this group of which we are sure. The Pharisees were a popular party. They greatly outnumbered any other religious group of their time. Whenever the Pharisees were taking sides in a dispute, they seemed to have the support of the people. The experience of Alexander Jannaeus in opposing this group proved the popular power they held. As a rule the Pharisees were not scholars, although we often find them closely identified with the scribes. They were the pupils of the scribes and studied the law just enough to enable them to observe it. A popular party cannot be a party of scholars. The scribes led, the Pharisees followed, so their



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beliefs were the same in general, which fact accounts for the close identification of the two groups. Also probably the majority of the scribes were Pharisees, thus linking the two groups together.

Although the Pharisees did enter into political disputes at times, they were not primarily a political party. Religion was their great concern and the observation of the law was the motive behind their existence. But living under a hierarchy, as they did, politics and religion were inseparable. What often seemed to be a religious motive for dispute proved to be political in the end. This was shown in the early activities of the Pharisees which will be our next study.

It seems that at a great feast, John Hyrcanus was asked to withdraw from the high priesthood. It is said that the motive for this request was that the Pharisees did not like him. At least he withdrew his allegiance from the latter and took a stand with the Sadducees. He nullified the ordinances of the Pharisees and punished those who observed them. An insurrection followed which he successfully suppressed. It is not certain whether the motive of the uprising was envy of the king's successor or a renewal of the enmity which existed between him and the Pharisees. If it was the latter--and it seems logical to think it so--then the <sup>Pharisees</sup> ~~priest~~ had the support of the people.

Terrible civil strife came with the reign of John Hyrcanus' son, Alexander Jannaeus. Officiating as high priest in the Feast of Tabernacles, the latter neglected part of the ceremony. A riot followed in the Temple and the rebels attempted in vain



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Terrible civil strife came with the reign of John Bryson, son, Alexander I. Offsetting as high priest in the feast of Tethermades, the latter neglected part of the ceremony. A riot followed in the Temple and the rebels attempted in vain



to put the high priest out of office. Later Alexander's defeat at the hand of the Arabs encouraged another rebellion. Again he was successful in suppressing the insurrection, but in the meantime the Arabs had secured a Syrian leader by the name of Seleucid Demetrius Eukairos to help them defeat their enemy, and when they succeeded in doing so and the Jews saw that they were victorious over Alexander, six thousand of them changed their allegiance and joined the ranks of their enemy. Pity for Alexander was suggested for the motive of this strange action, but it seems more likely that they saw that their victory would mean a foreign ruler. At least this made it possible for Alexander to entirely suppress the rebellion and he celebrated his victory by crucifying eight hundred prisoners. Eight thousand more fled for their lives. Modern writers have assumed that the opposition was the Pharisees, but the records do not directly say so. They were first mentioned in connection with Queen Alexandra when Alexander Jannaeus on his death-bed advised her to give power to the Pharisees so that she might be popular.<sup>1</sup> However, this implies that his trouble had been caused by doing the opposite, and thus it seems logical to suppose that modern writers are right in their assumption.

The Queen followed the advice given her and restored the ordinances of the Pharisees and gave them a free hand. Along with others they killed Diogenes who had been the friend and counsellor of Alexander and whom they accused of advising the killing of the eight hundred. Before long the nobles inter-

1. Moore p. 65.



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ferred and the Queen allowed the Pharisees to flee the country.

Of course the view we get from Josephus of the early activities of the Pharisees pictures only the conspicuous side of their lives; that is, the fighting and quarrelling in which they took part. But war and strife was not the primary object of their existence, and it seems too bad that the peaceful side of their living at this time is entirely hidden from us. We must look to a later time to learn the nature of the ordinary life of a Pharisee.

The most widely accepted explanation of the origin of the name "Sadducee" is "a follower of Zadok". After Solomon displaced Abiathar, as chief priest, because he joined with Adonijah in trying to seize the throne, he gave that office to Zadok. The sons of Zadok were to be the only priests in Ezekiel's ideal restoration. Thus the name "Sadducees" was given to those who held the highest offices in the priesthood. Of course it might be that the name Sadducees was simply the term that came to be applied to the priestly nobility with the rise of the hierarchy. Still another explanation is that Zadok and Boethus, two disciples of Antigonus of Socho, disputed the question of the after-life and their followers took their respective views and names. Those who held Zadok's view were called Sadducees while the followers of Boethus later became identified with the Pharisees. There is also a possibility that there was an unknown founder of the Sadducees.

Whatever their origin the Sadducees were, or at least grew







to be, a priestly aristocracy. We have no way of knowing just what per cent of the priesthood belonged to this party and where the line was drawn. It seems unreasonable to suppose that the Levites were included. To say the least the high priest and all his family, who held the highest offices in the priesthood, were chief among this group.

It is only natural that such a sect composed of those who held the most desirable positions in the entire nation, should be conservative. Any new idea which meant progress and change would meet their disapproval. Of course they were opposed to the popular party, the Pharisees, and one who understands the nature of the classes of people who composed these parties will readily see that there were more than dogmatic religious divisions between them. They stood for two fundamentally different elements in Jewish society; namely the nobility and the masses.

As far as the early activities of the Sadducees are concerned there are practically no references to them in the records. As a group they apparently took no part in the civil strife of the last two centuries B. C. and thus they are not mentioned by the writers who preserved the history of that period. It does not seem presumptuous to suppose that in these struggles the followers of the high priest included the Sadducees and thus they opposed the Pharisees. Such a situation would not lend to the friendliness of the two groups in the future.

During the second century B. C. there came into prominence a third religious group in Palestine called the Essenes. They lived apart from other people in a section close to Jerusalem west of the Dead Sea, and in villages over Judea. Their



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salem west of the Dead Sea, and in villages over Jordan. Their



communities were organized on a communistic basis. They bathed frequently and wore white robes, which were never discarded until worn out. They were celibates but adopted the children of others and trained them. They had their own rules for living and worship which were painfully observed. They farmed the land upon which they lived but strove to keep from contamination by contact with the lower orders. Their organization resembled that of the Christian monks in later times but their practices were more ascetic. Both the sources of their name and the nature of their origin are hidden in obscurity.

<sup>1</sup>  
As has been mentioned before, the tradition of the law was carried out through successive generations by pairs of colleagues who seemed to hold the positions of greatest individual authority among the scholars of their time. The last of these pairs was Shammai and Hillel. These men were unlike their predecessors in that they were unable to come to agreements on disputed matters, and although they did not strive to be heads of rival schools of thought, still they represented such vastly different tendencies in Judaism that the schools inevitably followed.

Shammai was a native Judean while Hillel came from Babylonia after he was grown. It is very likely that Hillel was a student of the law before coming to Jerusalem and came to study under Shemaiah and Abtalion, the colleagues who preceded Shammai and himself. Since in Jerusalem was to be found the fountain-head of tradition upon which one could readily draw for conclusions, it does not seem likely that one

1. Eusebius p. 11.

2. Falkenstein—The Background of the Gospels p. 133.



communities were organized on a communalistic basis. They helped frequently and wore white robes, which were never discarded until worn out. They were called and adopted the children of others and trained them. They had their own rules for living and worship which were painfully observed. They formed the land upon which they lived but strove to keep from contamination by contact with the lower orders. Their organization resembled that of the Christian monks in later times but their practices were more ascetic. Both the names of their names and the nature of their origin are hidden in obscurity. As has been mentioned before, the tradition of the law was carried out through successive generations by pairs of colleagues who seemed to hold the positions of greatest individual authority among the scholars of their time. The last of these pairs was Shammal and Hillel. These men were unlike their predecessors in that they were unable to agree to agreements on disputed matters, and although they did not strive to be heads of rival schools of thought, still they represented such vastly different tendencies in Judaism that the schools inevitably followed.

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who had done all his studying in Jerusalem should originate a formula such as Hillel's Seven Rules. These came to be the norm for arriving at conclusions from the written law, and thus it seems probable that, at least the idea of it, originated in Babylon where the need for such was greater than in Jerusalem.

The temperaments of these men were strikingly different. Shammai was a stern uncompromising type; very conservative of the letter of the law, due more to traditional principle than to a harsher disposition. The Mishna records that on the birth of a grandchild during the Feast of the Tabernacles he had the ceiling removed and the room roofed in with boughs, so that the infant too might keep the festival.

On the other hand, Hillel was of a gentler nature. He was concerned with the welfare of men as well as of the law and thus he took account of actual conditions. For example, since he saw that the law concerning the year of release and cancellation of debts was working hardships in his day, he devised what is called "Probul" which left the law unchanged<sup>1</sup> but protected the creditor from loss. Hillel also tried to establish harmony between tradition and the scripture, probably to silence the Sadducees in their contention that tradition was void of authority. One of his precepts reflects the character of Hillel: "Be a disciple of Aaron, seek peace,<sup>2</sup> love men, and devote thyself to the study of the law." Hillel differed from other law scholars of his day in that he sometimes based his conclusions upon reason instead of upon tradition

1. Moore p. 81.

2. Fairweather--The Background of the Gospels p. 189.



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alone. It is told that the elders of Bathyra were in doubt as to whether the fourteenth of Nisan fell on a Sabbath, the slaughter and preparation of the Paschal victim was an obligation superior to the Sabbatical prohibition of labor. They thought that Hillel, as a pupil of Shemaiah and Abtalion, might be able to tell the tradition on that point. But instead of giving the tradition they asked when consulted, he demonstrated by three distinct arguments that the Passover took precedence over the Sabbath. With contempt they exclaimed, "How could we expect anything from a Babylonian!" They argued with him all day until he finally said, "Thus I heard it from Shemaiah and Abtalion." Then they elected him their president and he replied, "If you had used the opportunities for studying under these two great scholars that taught in your country, you would not have need to call in a Babylonian!"<sup>1.</sup>

It is true that these two great men represented two tendencies in the study of the law, but in reality their points of difference, which the Talmud numbered three hundred,<sup>2</sup> were what we would regard as mere trifles; such as, whether it was lawful to eat an egg laid on a feast day. In their zeal for the law they made two laws. Out of their differences grew up the rabbinical conferences at which they discussed disputed points and voted for a conclusion. Such arguments were often very heated and bitter. Since the Sadducees were mainly confined to the Temple, this division among the scribes virtually amounted to a split in the Pharisaic party. Points of difference between these schools filled a large place in the Jewish traditions of Jesus' day.

1. Moore pp. 79.

2. Ibid. p. 82.



alone. It is said that the leaders of the party were in doubt as to whether the treatment of these Jews on a Sabbath, the slaughter and propagation of the Jewish religion was an obligation superior to the Sabbath prohibition of labor. They thought that killed, as a result of the Sabbath and Abolition, might be able to tell the position on that point. But instead of giving the position they asked when consulted, the Government of by three distinct arguments that the Government took precedence over the Sabbath. With confidence they explained, "How could we expect anything from a Jew?" They argued with him all day until he finally said, "Then I leave it to the Government and Abolition." The day closed with their president and he replied, "If you had had the opportunity for studying under these two great scholars that taught in your country, you would not have need to call in a Jew?"

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## THE NATURE OF JUDAISM IN JESUS' DAY

### Scriptural Interpretation

Since the basis of Judaism was the law, it is well to open our study of the nature of the Judaism of Jesus' day with a consideration of the branches of scriptural interpretation as they existed in the period with which we are dealing. "Midrash" is simply a term, meaning a scientific explanation of the scripture, which was applied to all interpretations fulfilling its meaning. "Mishna" was oral tradition which in later centuries was committed to writing and called by the same name. The Talmuds (Babylonian and Palestinian) were elaborations of the Mishna. All scribal activity concerning the scriptures was ~~at this time~~ included at this time under the titles of Halachah and Haggadah.

Halachah is the term applied to the precepts and interpretations of the written law pertaining to both social and individual living. After the establishment of the priestly code by Ezra, the law had to be interpreted to fit the particular cases as questions arose. The extent and range of each law had to be determined. To what cases in life did a particular precept apply? What consequences would result? What could be done to assure the observance of each commandment?

But this analysis of the written text was only the beginning of the task of the scribes. There were many so-called "difficulties" to solve. Direct contradictions in the legal code itself had to be explained satisfactorily, for the law



## THE NATURE OF JUDICIAL DECISION

## Historical Introduction

Since the basis of judicial decision was the law, it is well to

open our study of the nature of the judicial decision with a consideration of the processes of scriptural interpretation. It is clear that the period with which we are dealing, "Hilksch" is simply a term, meaning a scientific explanation of the scriptures, which was applied to all interpretations following the meaning. "Hilksch" was not a tradition which in later centuries was committed to writing and called by the same name. The Talmud (Babylonian and Palestinian) were elaborations of the Hilksch. All scriptural activity concerning the scriptures was at this time included at this time under the title of Hilksch and Haggadah.

Hilksch is the term applied to the processes and interpretations of the written law pertaining to both social and individual living. After the establishment of the Hilksch code by Ezra, the law had to be interpreted to fit the particular cases or questions arose. The extent and range of each law had to be determined. To what cases in life did a particular principle apply? What consequences would result? What could be done to secure the observance of each commandment? But this analysis of the written text was only the beginning of the task of the Hilksch. There were many so-called "Hilksch" to solve. These contradictions in the law code itself had to be explained satisfactorily, for the law



was truth in its finality, and could contain only harmony. Also, sometimes the requirements of the law were entirely inconsistent with actual life, and again harmony must be sought without sacrificing the law. However, the most numerous difficulties grew out of the incompleteness of the law itself. Since in theory the law was a perfect guide for living, it was necessary that it furnish instructions for action under all circumstances. This task was a source of inexhaustible labor. There were two ways of accomplishing it in a given case; (1) by inferring from already recognized dogmas and (2) by establishing an already existing tradition. The results of all the above mentioned law interpretation could be classified as Midrash.

However, there was a considerable portion of what later became valid law, which had no connection with the written code. A certain act might simply be a custom but when it had been used long enough that it could be said that it had always been so, the recognized teachers would confirm it, thus making it a binding law. It was this branch of law which, at least in the times of Jesus, was the Oral Tradition or Unwritten Law. The common term, "Tradition of the Elders" is also applied here.

Within this oral tradition were three categories, the first of which had the greatest degree of authority while the third had the lowest: (1) traditional enactments definitely traced back to Moses, (2) the great body of tradition proper, and (3) those precepts known as "the appointments of the



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scribes". Strange as it may seem this law of custom was quite as binding as the written Torah. In fact a particular decision of the Sanhedrin was : that opposition to the Tradition of the Elders was a greater offence than opposition to the written decrees, because the former, being the authentic exposition and completion of the latter, was the ultimate authority.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the Halachah was such that it could never be finished. New enactments and new customs were always forth-coming as the passing of time brought different usages and requirements. So it was that at any particular stage of development, it was necessary to make a distinction between what was already valid and what had merely been discovered by the inferences of the scribes. In order that a precept might be admitted to the Halachah as binding law, it was necessary that the majority of the recognized scholars should decide in its favor. But, once it had gained admittance, it must be unconditionally obeyed though ninety-nine be against it and only one for it. It was this principle which made possible the unity of practice characteristic of Judaism. Even the difficulties which grew out of the separation of the schools of Shammai and Hillel were by this method overcome in time.

In spite of the fact that Oral Tradition differed vastly from the written law, the latter was formerly held as the supreme rule from which all legal axioms must be derived.

1. Schurer Vol I. p. 334.



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Thus it fell upon the scribes to find textual proof for every precept. It was to aid in this branch of activity, that Hillel's seven rules were advanced, and they so grew in favor and esteem that finally every orthodox Jew recited them each morning as a part of his devotions.<sup>1</sup>

The subject matter with which the Halachah concerned itself was theoretically at least, identical with that in the Torah. It is not surprising to know that the law pertaining to ritual filled a larger space than any other subject. After establishing by law, the manner in which God wanted to be honored, this department developed into detailed precepts concerning (1) the sacrificial ritual; (2) the celebration of Holy days, especially the Sabbath and the annual feasts such as the Passover, Pentecost and the Tabernacles; (3) the tribute for the Temple and priesthood--first fruits, heave offerings, tithes, the first born, the half-shekel tribute, vows, free-will offerings and all matters pertaining to these; and (4) various other appointments among which the most important were the laws concerning the clean and unclean.

Another department according to subject matter was civil and criminal law. Although the principles along this line found in the Mosaic law, would form an adequate basis for a rather complete code, they were not at all equally developed. Marriage laws received the most elaborate treatment, partly because their nature would permit such, and partly because they were more closely connected with religion. The rest



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of civil law was not so fully worked out while criminal law received even less emphasis. Practically no effort was spent on public law due to the political circumstances and to the lack of a foundation in the law of Moses.

The second great division of Jewish interpretation of scriptures was called "Haggada". Herford defines it as, "The interpretation of the scriptures not for the regulation<sup>1</sup> of conduct but for edification in general". It was an elaboration of the historical and narrative portions of the sacred text. In that day they might have spoken of it as the modernizing of what was originally given, to fit the views and needs of the times. A small portion of this department might be termed midrash, since it was thought to be scientific interpretation; for example, several historical statements might be taken from different parts of the scripture and combined in such a way that one completed another, or a prophetic utterance might be isolated from its context and so manipulated as to form a dogma. However, this stricter kind of treatment formed only a small portion of the body of Haggadah.

In this larger department of free religious speculation, rules and methods were practically out of question. Besides the lack of strict regulations for interpretation, the principle of a careful adherence to tradition was also entirely absent here. The natural result was that in this branch of activity religious fancy and unbridled imagination were allowed free range. The only rule which was binding in this work

1. Herford- The Pharisees. p. 82.



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was that the investigator had the right to make anything of a passage of scripture which his wit and understanding would allow him to do. In speaking of the extreme contrast between the requirements placed upon an interpretation in these two branches of religious work (Halachah and Haggadah) Schurer writes: "Religious faith was comparatively free, while action was all the more strictly shackled".<sup>1</sup> Judaism laid the chief stress upon the correctness of action and allowed comparatively free play in the sphere of the development of religious notions.

As a result of this freedom we find here a much greater variety of treatment. Herford suggests that "almost anything but coarse jesting" was eligible for admittance into the Haggadah.<sup>2</sup> Stories, parables, fancies, legends, myths, and allegories were all characteristic here. Changes of thought were more rapid in this sphere of work because they were not limited by the necessity of a majority vote of a conservative body, but were simply dependent upon the ideas and feelings of individuals. A third result of this freedom was that there was much greater possibility for the intrusion of foreign influences. It will be easy to see the truth of the statement as we take up the study of the doctrines of Judaism later in this thesis. Another tendency which resulted from this free play of imagination was to lay the greater stress on the non-essentials of religion. Schurer uses a vivid figure of speech

1. Schurer Vol. I p. 348.

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in presenting this idea; "It was in entire consistency with this tendency of the whole development, that <sup>special preference</sup> such objects as lay more at the circumference than in the center of religious life, with the temporally and locally transcendent, with the future and the heavenly world. For the weaker the power of genuine religion, the more would fancy and reflection move from the center to the circumference, and the more would such objects be detached from their central points and acquire an independent value and interest." <sup>2</sup> Herein lies the source of eschatology. Further, it was due to this liberty of speculation as coupled with the strictness of law interpretation, that the whole body of religious ideas in the time of Jesus received on one hand a fanciful, and on the other hand, a scholastic character. The subject matter of the Haggadah naturally has a very wide range. Let us turn our attention to investigate this point.

As a rule history was treated with the motive of proving what the scholar of a later time thought ought to have been, regardless of facts. Our best example of this type of work is that of the Chronicler whose supreme motive was to establish and uphold the priestly order, and thus he added to the earlier records many stories to show how certain pious kings, especially David, supported and generously provided for the priestly ritual. <sup>1</sup> The creation story formed the basis for a great deal of speculation. If a scribe felt that the story <sup>he</sup> as found it did not mention all that he felt had to be created, he simply added his list to what was there and said nothing

1. I Chronicles 12:39,40; 13:1-14; 15:16-24; 16:4-6; 16:37-43.
2. Schurer Vol. I p. 346.



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about it. Many legends surround the lives of prominent Bible characters as Adam and the patriarchs. The Book of Enoch was so named because Enoch in the scriptures, who was miraculously translated to Heaven, seemed especially adapted for revealing heavenly mysteries to men. Of course Moses and his age were surrounded with the brightest halo. To us such alterations of history seem altogether wrong, but we must not suppose that the scribes held a similar view. On the contrary, they were undoubtedly very sincere, and thought they were improving the scripture by making them fit the needs of their age.

Moral and religious passages of scripture were treated the same as history. Here imagination was a very fertile source for new ideas and it took the lead of stricter interpretations, the latter developing in the same direction as the former. This section of the Haggadah dealt with moral obligation, the nature of sin, and the theories of repentance and atonement.

Philosophical problems were also discussed. How could man conceive the revelation of God? How could it be possible for God to have an influence upon the world without being drawn down into the finite? How could there be evil in a world created and governed by God?

Previous national experience, coupled with the play of an unfettered religious fancy, gave rise to an abundance of ideas concerning the realization of the salvation of Israel in







some future period of the earth's history. Pictures of the conditions prior to the great change, the requirements necessary to fulfill before salvation could be expected, means and forces together with descriptions of the upheaval proper, and most particularly the glory of the age that would follow, were elaborately developed.

Likewise learned reflection and inventive fancy readily applied themselves to the heavenly world. The nature and attributes of God, heaven as his abode, his ministers and their characters and functions, and the world, all received consideration. With this view of Haggadah we need not argue its importance as the source of the doctrinal faith of Judaism.

#### Institutions of Judaism.

The basic institution of any people or religion is the home. Of course, the primary function of the home was not to perpetuate Judaism, nevertheless it did serve very effectively to give instruction and teach the observance of the law. Every loyal Jew who was the parent of a child was bound by law to teach that child the knowledge<sup>of</sup> and obedience<sup>1</sup> to the Torah. Josephus repeatedly commended the zeal with which the Jewish parents instructed their young: "We take most pains of all with the instruction of children, and esteem the observation of the laws, and the piety corresponding with them, the most important affair of our whole life"<sup>2</sup>

1. Deuteronomy 6:4f.

2. Schurer Vol. II p. 47.



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"But for our people if anybody do but ask one of them about our laws, he will more readily tell them all than he will tell his own name, and this in consequence of our having learned them immediately as soon as we became sensible of anything and of our having them, as it were, engraved upon our souls." <sup>1</sup> As soon as a child was old enough to talk he was taught to repeat: "Hear O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah, thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might."

Over the doorpost of every Jewish home hung a parchment upon which was written the name of Jehovah. Whether coming into or going from the house, one must touch the sacred name with the fingers and then touch them to the lips. As the Sabbath approached the Jewish household was astir. The meal had to be prepared before hand; the Sabbath lamp must be lighted at the proper time, and a portion of the dough must be set apart for the household. Not only were the Jewish tots familiar with such activity, but the parents were bound to teach the observation of the Sabbath. Furthermore children were bound by the law to the usual prayer and prayer at the table. Home instruction made this possible. The feasts and fasts must have made their impressions; and boys were required to attend the chief festivals at a very young age, particularly the Feast of the Tabernacles. We could also imagine the stories told at

1. Hinsdale, A. B.--Jesus as a Teacher p. 34.







mother's knee of the heroes, sages, priests, prophets, kings, poets, wisemen and patriots, all taken from the sacred scriptures.

So we see the Jewish home as an efficient basis for popular education, such as that of which no other oriental people could boast. In fact it seems very doubtful whether civilization has brought to any people of modern times a more effective foundation for religious education.

We have no definite proof that at the time of Jesus there were established elementary schools in nearly all the towns of Judea which children of the ages of six and seven were expected to attend. However authorities are pretty well agreed that such was the case and it seems most reasonable to suppose so. We know that there was compulsory education in the time of Jesus son of Gamaliel 63-65 A. D.<sup>2</sup> The success of the priestly code was directly dependent upon popular knowledge of the law. One of the chief branches of scribal activity was to give instruction, and it was primarily through the synagogue that this was accomplished. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that, so long a time after the establishment of the Priestly Code, as the opening of the Christian era, there was a rather well developed system of schools for instruction in the law. As soon as a child was old enough the study of the law began with memorizing the Shema (creed), then short sayings and then the psalms. Also there was a special text committed for

1. Schurer Vol II p. 49

2. Ibid. p. 49



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**Birthdays.** The fact that forgetfulness and ignorance were abhorred by every Jew usually served to make a child diligent in his studies.

Of course the primary aim of all this zeal for the instruction of youths was the inculcation of the law upon the minds and hearts of all Jews. Thus it is evident that the subject matter was limited to the Book of the law. Most of the work was in the form of drills for memorization. However, great importance was attached to the reading of the scripture, and so instruction in reading was a necessary part of the elementary curriculum. The art of writing was more difficult and professional and probably was not generally taught to children. Classes met in the synagogue on week-days and also on Sabbath afternoons. When a Jewish boy first showed signs of manhood or puberty, he became bound to observe the full law, and thus was entitled to all the rights, and obliged to perform all the duties of a full-grown Israelite. Later, thirteen years was fixed as the definite time for this change, but likely in the time of Jesus there was no fixed age. It is plain to see that such a requirement would make essential, a very effective elementary education in the matters of law observance.

Besides an elementary training in the synagogue school, it was the ideal of legal Judaism that every Israelite should have a professional acquaintance with the law. Of course, this was not possible for all, because such would demand too



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large a portion of the time and efforts of the working class of people. However, the scribes even as far back as the men of the Great Synagogue had adopted the motto: "Bring up many scholars" and they strove to impart their knowledge to the greatest possible number of people. The famous rabbis would assemble about them, great numbers of youths and teach them by tedious drills of memorization, the precepts of the law. Many of these classes met in the synagogues. In Jerusalem, of course, the outer courts of the Temple served as class rooms. The teacher was on an elevation while his pupils sat on the ground around him. One receiving such professional training had two chief duties: (1) to keep faithfully in memory all that had been taught him and (2) never to teach anything otherwise than it had been delivered to him. This latter requirement resulted in the profoundest respect of pupil for teacher. However pupils were allowed to propose questions for discussion and decisions were derived either by vote of the class or by answer from the teacher. Oral tradition was entirely carried in this manner.

The probable origin of the synagogue has already been suggested. With the people of the exile, the Sabbath assemblages doubtless filled a great need in their lives as a method of giving expression to their deep religious feelings. But worship, especially later in Judea, was not the primary aim of these services. It was, rather, instruction in the law, which was essential to the services of the new religious



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system. Otherwise the general establishment of the synagogue would not have been necessary in the restored Jewish community, for there was then a much more elaborate worship system in connection with the Jerusalem Temple than existed before its destruction. The Sabbath synagogue service was a well established institution in New Testament times.<sup>1</sup>

In all probability the organization of the synagogue was very closely connected to that of the civil community, especially in localities where the population was entirely Jewish. In large cities composed of many nationalities, the religious organization was necessarily separate and distinct from civil functions. In other words in the ordinary Jewish locality the elders of the community were also the elders of the synagogue.<sup>2</sup>

The general direction of the affairs of the congregation was in the hands of these "elders". With them lay the power of discipline in individual cases. Expulsion from the congregation was the punishment for a serious misdemeanor. This differed from the early Christian church since, in the latter,<sup>3</sup> only the group as a whole had such powers of excommunication.

Besides these officers for the general management of the affairs of the congregation, special officers were appointed for special duties. The "Ruler of the Synagogue" was chosen to care for the external order of the public worship, and the provision of all necessary materials. He was not concerned with the affairs of the community but

1. Mark 1:21, 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31, 6:6; Acts 13:14, 15:21.

2. Schurer Vol. II p. 58.

3. I Cor. 5:13.







simply was conductor of the assembly for worship. It was he who appointed the persons to read the scriptures and prayers and summoned a preacher for the occasion.<sup>1</sup> It was his responsibility to see that nothing unbecoming to the service occurred and also he had charge of the building.<sup>2</sup>

The "receivers of alms" had nothing to do with the service as such but they collected the gifts for the poor at the synagogue. Both money and products were received and distributed by them. Each house of worship had a "minister" who was literally the servant of the congregation. Such duties, as bringing out the rolls of scriptures for the services and then putting them away again, executing scourging as punishment, and teaching the children to read, were his. Although they were not officers, there were appointed "ten unemployed men" who, for a fee made it their business to be present always at the services, for the purpose of making the required number of ten members for a religious assembly.

One peculiarity of the synagogue organization was that no special officers were appointed to perform the acts proper of the worship service, at least not as early as the time of Jesus. The reading of the scriptures, the praying and the preaching were freely carried out in turn by different members of the congregation. Jesus and Paul both took parts in the synagogue worship.

The synagogue building was preferably located outside of the city near a river or on the sea shore for convenience of performing the acts of purification necessary before

1. Acts 13:15.

2. Luke 13:14.







attending worship. The size and architecture of the buildings were not at all uniform. There is little proof that they were roofless, although on their fast days, the Jews did offer their prayers in the open spaces. It is very probably that there <sup>was</sup> a synagogue in every town of Palestine in the time of Jesus, and a considerable number in the large cities, such as, sixty-one in Jerusalem.

The fittings of the synagogue were very simple. The rolls of the law and the sacred books were wrapped in linen, laid in a case, and kept in a closet. The reading desk stood on an elevated platform from which the scriptures were read and the preaching delivered. There were also lamps. A trombone was indispensable for use on the first day of the year and a trumpet was blown for the feast days.

The congregation sat in an appointed order. The distinction of a member was marked by the relative nearness of his seat toward the front. Men and women sat apart. If there was a leper in the community he was given a special division of the room.

The service was opened by the recitation of the Shema which was really a confession of faith consisting of three scriptural passages, Deuteronomy 4:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41, together with benedictions before and after. This was followed by the reading of the prayer during which all







stood with faces turned toward Jerusalem, the city of the Holy of Holies. Only the person chosen by the ruler of the synagogue uttered the prayer, which he did standing in front of the chest where were kept the rolls of the law. From this custom came our expression to "lead in prayer". Every adult member of the congregation was competent to do this.

The scripture lessons, one from the Pentateuch and one from the prophets were likewise read by members of the congregation. Minors were allowed this privilege but priests and Levites were given first preference. In Palestine on the Sabbath at least seven were summoned to take part in the reading, each person reading at least three verses--they could not repeat them from memory. The Pentateuch was divided into 154 sections and a cycle of three years was required to cover the consecutive lessons. Following the reading from the Torah, one person read a selection from the prophets. This lesson was omitted at week-day and Sabbath afternoon services. Accompanying the reading of the scriptures was a continuous translation from Hebrew into Aramaic. It is not certain whether the translator was a permanent official or simply a competent member of the congregation.

The scripture lessons were followed by a sermon or lecture in which the former were explained and applied. The preacher who was also chosen for the occasion, sat on an elevation. Luke 4:20f tells how Jesus read from Isaiah, standing, and then sat down before giving his explanation.







The service was closed with a blessing, providing a priest was present to pronounce it. If not, a closing prayer was made in its stead. Besides the Sabbath morning services there was worship Monday, Friday and Sabbath afternoon.

The value of the synagogue in perpetuating Judaism cannot be over-estimated. The primary object of its services was to hear the law and read it accurately. The people generally were dependent upon the synagogue for the rudimentary knowledge of the law necessary to every Jew. Besides giving instruction the synagogue was a house of prayer where loyal hearts could commune with God apart from priestly ritual. It was the people's institution. Fairweather's evaluation of the synagogue follows: "It is clear, therefore, that the synagogue was school and church in one; and in view of the two great functions which it discharged, its value for the religious life of Judaism can scarcely be over-estimated. It enjoyed great popularity and had great influence. More than any other agency, it helped to bind Judaism into a uniform and compact whole. By fostering distinction between priests and laity, and by its democratic basis, saved religion from the domination of the learned. It created also a new conception of worship, in accordance with which prayer took the place of animal sacrifice, and spiritual edification was derived from the study of God's Word. The Sabbath was freed from its ceremonial character and transformed into a day of hallowed fellowship. For the devout Jew the Temple



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and its ritual were no longer a necessity. All this was the fruit of that most typical illustration of the genius of Judaism--the synagogue.<sup>1</sup> It is also significant praise coming from the pen of Herford when he writes that Jesus never<sup>2</sup> criticized this institution.

From our previous view of the Temple and the priesthood as it was at the close of the Persian period we get a general picture of the conditions in this respect, existing in Jesus' day. The Temple was the national sanctuary of Jehovah and the sole place for offering sacrifice. The priesthood was a sacred order whose purpose was to serve the people by offering their sacrifices to God. Admittance into the order was dependent upon a perfect physique and a proper pedigree. Levites also were required to prove their descentance theoretically from the tribe of Levi. Josephus suggests that he found his pedigree recorded in "the public archives",<sup>3</sup> and so it is likely that public records were kept for this purpose. The high priest of course was the Jewish ruler, and his family held the best positions under him. The twenty-four courses of priests who served in rotation had been sub-divided in Jesus' time and a "head" presided over each division and sub-division. The importance and influence of these various groups was by no means equal. These social differences became so great that in time the more influential went to the lengths of taking the tithes from the lower priests, and thus leaving the latter to starve. It is need-

1. Fairweather-The Background of the Gospels p. 27.

2. Herford- The Pharisees p. 100.

3. Schurer Vol. II p. 210.



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1. Helman--the politician of the Gospel p. 17.  
 2. Helman--the politician p. 17.  
 3. Helman Vol. II p. 17.



less to suggest that the relatives of the high priest ranked highest in prestige. As a result of such differences of rank, the political sympathies of these circles were varied, the lower orders favoring revolution and change while those of high rank bitterly opposed such. Thus it was that in Jesus' day we find some of the ordinary priests in sympathy with the Pharisees rather than the Sadducees.

The marriage regulations required that a priest marry only an undefiled Jewish virgin or widow. A high priest could not even marry a widow but only a pure virgin. However, in neither case was it required that the woman be of a priestly family.

One of the greatest reasons for the growth of the power and influence of the priesthood was that with the establishment of the Priestly Code, the material wealth of the priests was increased almost beyond measure. By the time of the Christian era the law was so well rooted and deeply revered that even those who felt the great injustice of its provisions dared not utter a word against the sacred law.

Certain offerings were "most holy" and as such had to be eaten in the inner court of the Temple. Thus the relatives could not share them. These were the entire sin-offerings and trespass offerings; all, but a small portion of meat-offerings which had to be burned on the altar; and the shewbread after staying in the Temple for a week. Of the thank-offering, the breast and the right shoulder went to the



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priest, while the remainder was eaten by the offerer. The priest's portion could be eaten in a "clean place" and so his family could share it. The skins of the victims for burnt-offerings were comparatively meager remuneration, but even then were a considerable revenue for the priests since this type of offering was a very frequent sacrifice.

The bulk of the Priest's income was in the form of dues paid independent of sacrifices. An interesting custom grew up with the offering of the "seven kinds" of products of the soil named in Deuteronomy 8:8. On this occasion all the people of a district assembled in the principal town and formed a procession to Jerusalem. At its head was the ox which would form the festive offering with its horns gilded and garlands of olive branches on them. Pipes were blown and great merry-making characterized the march. As they entered the courts of the Temple, the Levites sang the thirtieth psalm. Then each person in turn repeated the confession found in Deuteronomy 26:5-10 and presented the priest with his basket, laden with the choicest grains, wines, and fruits.

Another offering of products of ground and trees was called "terumah" and was supposed to be a free religious expression of no specified amount, although one-fiftieth of the whole yield came to be the expected average. Besides these "everything which may be used as food and is cultivated and grows out of the earth is liable to tithe," according to the Mishna. This was a very large source of revenue but went to the Levites who in turn gave a tithe of the tithe



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a procession to Jerusalem. At its head was the ox which would form the festive offering with its horns clipped and garlands of olive branches on them. Flutes were blown and great merry-making characterized the march. As they entered the courts of the Temple, the Levites sang the thirtieth psalm. Then each person in turn repeated the confession found in Leviticus 23:14-15 and presented the priest with his basket, laden with the choicest grain, wine, and fruit.

Another offering of products of ground and trees was called "terumah" and was supposed to be a free religious expression of no specified amount, although one-fiftieth of the whole yield came to be the expected average. Besides these "voluntary" offerings which may be used as food and is eaten by the Levites and grows out of the earth is liable to tithing, according to the Mishnah. This was a very large source of revenue but went to the Levites who in turn gave a fifth of the tithes



to the priests. The owners saved out a second tithe which was used for their own benefit in the form of a sacrificial feast in Jerusalem. Another offering called "challah" was in the form of dough for bread made of either wheat, barley, spelt, oats or rye. One-twenty-fourth part was required of an individual, while public bakers gave one-forty-eighth.

There were three different kinds of regular offerings from the rearing of cattle: (1) the male first-born, of clean animals, i.e. cattle, sheep and goats; of unclean animals, i.e. horses, asses, camels; and of man. The first man child had to be ransomed by the payment of a tax of five shekels; (2) Of all flesh that was slaughtered for ordinary use, the priests received the shoulder, two cheeks and the stomach; and again (3) a portion of the proceeds from sheep-shearing, where an owner had many sheep, added to the priestly revenue.

Besides the regular offerings mentioned an endless number of occasions called for special sacrifices. These included: (1) consecration vows--fifty shekels for a man and thirty for a woman or else equivalent property; (2) a special consecration vow called the "ban", i.e. property irredeemably devoted to the sanctuary; (3) indemnity for unlawful possession of another's property whose identity was lost. Only a small portion of vows went to the priests.

Another class of offerings was to defray the expenses of the Temple worship. A half shekel tax was required of every Jewish man twenty years of age. It had to be paid in the



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early Hebrew standard money in the month of Adar (about March). It was gathered in each community and sent to Jerusalem in its name. This was used in defraying expenses of the daily burnt-offerings and other sacrifices offered in the name of the people. It was further required that families furnish offerings of so much wood for the altar. From the rich came the free-will offerings which were an added source of wealth for the Temple.

We have already suggested the virtual kingship of the high priest and his corresponding power and authority. As far as the Temple ritual was concerned he was bound by law to officiate only on the Great Day of Atonement when the great sin-offering of the people was made. However, he usually chose to officiate on festive occasions. He was most gorgeously attired when exercising his functions except when he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement at which time he wore a simple white dress of expensive linen.

Next in rank to the high priest was one chosen to be "segen" who was to be ready to take the place of the high priest on the Great Day of Atonement in case of accident which might prevent the latter from officiating. This office was probably identified with that of "captain of the Temple," whose business it was to superintend the preserving of order in and around the Temple.<sup>1</sup>

Next in rank were the presidents of the twenty-four leading divisions and after them the heads of the sub-divisions.

1. Acts 4:1, 5:24.



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Next in rank were the presidents of the twenty-four leading divisions and other than the heads of the sub-divisions.



These priests had to sponsor the regular functions of the priesthood which were of three categories. (1) The care of the Temple property; such as the sacrificial utensils, the curtains and priests' garments, the natural products and large sums of money. Treasurers were appointed to care for the money which was kept in the inner court and required constant guarding and handling. (2) A large staff of officials was required for police duty. The outer court was guarded by the doorkeepers of the Levites. Besides these, watchmen patrolled by night and day to see that order was seemly. The steps to the rectangular inner court were guarded by the priests. The railing at the foot of the stairs marked the place beyond which no Gentile could pass under penalty of death. The Romans allowed this sentence to be executed even<sup>1</sup> in cases when the offenders were Roman citizens. The captain of the Temple would go around at night to see that the guards were not sleeping at their posts. The openings and closing of the gates required the services of two hundred men. An officer was appointed whose special duty it was to superintend the shutting of the gates. The keys were kept by the elders of the division of priests who were serving on watch duty within the court. The gates were ordinarily opened a little before day-break since it was required that the morning sacrifice be offered at that time. During Pass-over they were opened as early as midnight.

The duties in connection with the acts of worship proper



These priests had to represent the regular functions of the priesthood which were of three categories: (1) The care of the Temple property; such as the sacrificial animals, the courtyards and private gardens, the ritual processions and large sums of money. The others were appointed to care for the money which was kept in the treasury and required constant guarding and handling. (2) A large staff of officials was required for police duty. The order court was guarded by the headquarters of the Levites. Besides these, watchmen patrolled by night and day to see that order was easily. The steps to the watchmen's inner court were guarded by the priests. The railing at the foot of the stairs marked the place beyond which no Gentile could pass under penalty of death. The Romans allowed this sentence to be executed even in cases when the offenders were Roman citizens. The cap-<sup>1</sup>tain of the Temple would go around at night to see that the guards were not sleeping at their posts. The opening and closing of the gates required the services of two hundred men. An officer was appointed whose special duty it was to superintend the shutting of the gates. The keys were kept by the elders of the division of priests who were leaving on watch duty within the court. The gates were ordinarily opened a little before day-break since it was required that the morning sacrifice be offered at that time. During the day they were opened as early as midnight.

The gates in connection with the acts of worship proper



were of course performed by the priests and Levites. There were a number of special stated officers for particular duties; i. e. taking charge of (1) the casting of lots, (2) the buying of birds for sacrificing, (3) preparing the shewbread, and (4) frankincense, (5) sounding a cymbal to commence the music, (6) caring for the veils and (7) priest's garments and (8) taking charge of the psalmody. Besides there were: (9) a temple physician, (10) a master of the wells and (11) a herald, whose voice was so powerful it could be heard in Jericho.

The musicians (Levites) accompanied the daily burnt-offering. The opening signal was struck on the cymbal by a priest. Two stringed instruments, the psalter and the harp accompanied the singing. Reed pipes were added on the occasions of the annual feasts. The Levites were not allowed to blow the trumpets which formed an added accompaniment to the services; thus, the priests were the trumpeters. Also the dawn of the Sabbath was announced from the roof of the Temple by the blowing of trumpets.

There is little mention made of Temple slaves at the time of Jesus. There were so-called "servants" which seem to be very closely identified with the Levites in general. Boys belonging to the priestly families, also performed many menial duties.

As has been suggested, both the priests and Levites were divided into twenty-four courses. These served weekly starting on the Sabbath in time for the evening offering and



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There is no historical evidence to show that the Temple was finished with the following Sabbath morning offering and special offerings. During the three leading annual festivals (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) all the courses served simultaneously. Each sub-division of the priests served for a division of the week and lots were cast early each morning to determine which duties would be performed by which persons. The people also were divided into twenty-four courses which took turns by weeks in coming before God with their sacrifices. A division of the people performing this duty called a "station", was not required to go up to Jerusalem in its entirety. Instead a delegation represented the group at the Temple while the rest assembled themselves in the nearby synagogues engaging in prayer and the reading of the scriptures.

When officiating, a priest wore short breeches, a long cloak, a turban, and a girdle--all pure white linen save for bright colored ornaments on the girdle. In harmony with the whiteness of his clothing a priest was required to abstain from all intoxicating drink, bathe each morning and wash both hands and feet before making an offering to God.

Space will not permit a detailed description of the Temple and its elaborate ritual services, but for our purpose of understanding the nature of Judaism in general, the foregoing picture of the activities of the priesthood will suffice. Let us look next at the Sanhedrin as an institution of Judaism.







There is no historical evidence to show that the Sanhedrin existed previous to 196 B. C., although some have tried to identify it with other tribunals to which historians had referred. If this institution did exist previous to the time mentioned, we have no way of knowing its origin or early activities. When first we hear of it, it was organized as a senate or great council serving in both legislative and judicial functions. Politically the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin was limited to the territory included in the kingdom of the ruler at a particular time. Then, as the kingdom was diminished after the rule of Herod the Great, until finally Judea proper was all that remained, the civil authority of the Sanhedrin was also restricted to the eleven toparchies of that territory. On the other hand, this body had absolute power in religious matters and thus its power and authority had no boundaries but extended anywhere that Jews lived or had dealings. It was the supreme court of justice of the Jewish nation and with the high priest at its head, it practically regulated the whole internal affairs of the nation. Of course in political matters it was subject to the foreign rulers.

The Sanhedrin was not a democratic body although it was the first Jewish <sup>authoritative organization</sup> authority to contain laymen. At first it was composed mainly, of the priestly nobility who were the Sadducees, but as the Pharisees gained influence the priests had to recognize their power and allow them representation in







this supreme tribunal. Thus at the time of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was composed in general of two factors: that of the priestly aristocracy with Sadducean sympathies on one hand, and the Pharisaic Doctors on the other. Very little is known as to the requirements of eligibility for membership in the body or how vacancies were filled. Of course only a Jew of pure blood could gain admittance. There may have been a certain amount of rabbinical learning required of a candidate. We can hardly suppose that new members were chosen every year or every few years by the people, but rather it seems probable that a member held that honor for life, and vacancies were filled by vote of the tribunal itself or by appointment of the high priest or Roman ruler. Seventy-one was likely the number of members.

As to the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, it's direct authority was limited to Judea and although it's orders were binding in religious matters throughout orthodox Judaism, obedience to such orders was dependent upon the pleasure of the people and could not be forced beyond the territory of it's jurisdiction. In Judea all judicial and administrative matters which could not be dealt with competently by the inferior courts, or which had not been reserved for himself by the Roman procurator, were settled by the Sanhedrin. Only in cases when the lower courts could not agree as to a judgment, could appeal to the supreme court be made. The decision of an inferior court could not be appealed. The







Sanhedrin could not execute the death sentence without the consent of the procurator. For the offence of a Gentile entering the inner court of the Temple the Roman rulers even consented to the deaths of Roman citizens. Thus as a rule the procurator approved the sentences of the Sanhedrin and left it to exercise a rather extensive jurisdiction, the most serious restriction being the fact that Roman authorities reserved the right to take the initiative themselves at any time and proceed independently of the Jewish court. An example of this was when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is definitely known regarding the time and place of meeting of the Sanhedrin. Local courts met on Mondays and Thursdays. This may have been the practice of the supreme court also. There were no courts held on Sabbaths or festival days, of course, and since capital sentence could not be passed until the day following a trial, they would be careful not to consider cases of a nature that might result in such a sentence on the day preceding a holy day. The most likely conjecture as to the meeting place would be a hall outside the Temple walls on the slope of the mountain.<sup>2</sup> Although the Sanhedrin met in the palace of the high priest on the occasion on which Jesus was condemned to death, this was probably an exception to the rule, because it met during the night.

When the Sanhedrin met the members sat in order of their

1. Acts 23:10.

2. Schürer p. 190.



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distinction in a semicircle. In front of them two clerks stood reading the record of the votes. The most learned men had assigned seats in three rows facing the semicircle. The prisoner was required to appear humble and dressed in mourning. Evidence in favor preceded that for conviction. After one spoke in favor of the accused, he was not allowed to say anything unfavorable, although the converse was permissible. The learned men could only speak in favor of the prisoner in cases involving the death sentence. Acquittal might be given the same day as the trial, but a sentence of condemnation had to be postponed until the following day. Votes were cast one by one beginning with the youngest member of the court, while on other occasions for expression, the reverse order was used. A simple majority was sufficient for release but a majority of two was required for condemnation. In case the vote stood twelve to eleven for conviction it was necessary that other members' votes be added by twos until a decision was reached. Of course, when all seventy-one members had voted, the limit was reached.

We see in the institutions of Judaism, a foundation for a religion rooted deeply in popular education, prestige and authority which doubtless made possible the survival of that religion through the ages.

#### Distinguishing Features of the Sects of

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Distinguishing Features of the Sects of Judaism in Israel, 1900.

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of the history and nature of the three most prominent sects of Judaism, namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. Now let us consider further the beliefs and activities which were peculiar to these groups at the time of Jesus.

We have already suggested the difference in the make-ups of the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees. The former was in general a priestly order, the ideas for which it stood, being drawn chiefly from the virtual rulers of the nation. Naturally the beliefs of this group were conservative, striving to preserve the general order of things as it existed. On the other hand the Pharisees were the popular party, greatly outnumbering the Sadducees, getting their ideas from the scribes and holding the more progressive and liberal views. As the nature of these parties suggests it is not surprising that there were many issues which were bones of contention between them.

(1) Herford believes that the greatest point of division between the Pharisees and Sadducees was their attitudes toward oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> After the establishment of the priestly code, decisions for particular cases had to be made. Questions naturally arose as to the guiding principle to follow, the authority to establish such and the relation of these decisions to the written law. Two opposing views resulted. The first was that the Pentateuch alone was binding law. The Pledge of obedience meant simply the cases where

1. Herford - The Pharisees p. 15.



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(1) The Pharisees taught the existence of angels, demons, the application was direct. When other cases arose the priests should be the authority to make ordinances to cover them but these were not Torah. Deuteronomy 18:9-11 gave this privilege to the priests, it was claimed. This view was that which was first held after Ezra but in time a liberal group began to see that these ordinances which were entirely unrelated to the law would tend to make the latter obsolete and of no value in practical living. A conservative group held to the first attitude which finally became the view of the Sadducees. The newer opinion was that every ordinance must be in harmony with the written law. Not only priests but anyone with knowledge could interpret the law, since the latter was given to all Israel and not merely to the priests alone. The people had pledged to obey the Torah and thus, if the law was to be their guide for living, it must embody all religious duty. Thus oral tradition was as binding as the written law and was often considered more so because the former was the elaboration and explanation of the latter. This was the Pharisaic attitude.

(2) Another issue between the Pharisees and Sadducees was concerning their respective views of the after-life. The Pharisees had definite doctrines which established their beliefs in the resurrection, the judgment, and the after-life. All of these were denied by the Sadducees and along with their denial of immortality, they renounced the entire Messianic hope at least in the form it had taken in the day of Jesus.



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(3) The Pharisees taught the existence of angels, demons, guardian angels, ghosts, and spirits of the dead while the Sadducees denied all of them.

(4) Again these parties held differing views regarding divine providence and human freedom. The Pharisees combined the ideas of fate and freedom, contending that both operate in every transaction. On the other hand the Sadducees denied fate entirely and placed God beyond the possibility of doing or providing anything evil.

Although the Pharisees were the popular party, they did not include the majority of the people. Economic reasons and lack of perseverance and sincerity made it impossible for all the people to be ceremonially clean and strict observers of the law always. Thus there was a great mass of people from which the Pharisees made their duty to "separate" themselves. The Pharisees in the Temple prayed, "God I thank thee<sup>1</sup> that I am not as the rest of men". However, the am-harez (the unclean people) in general held the doctrinal views and were in sympathy with the Pharisees. So, Pharisaism was the legitimate and classic representative of Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era.

The Essenes differed from the Pharisees and Sadducees in that they were not exactly a religious party sometimes engaging in political activities but were rather a monastic order living apart from ordinary society, and exercising no powerful influence on the people as a whole. Schurer

1. Luke 18:9-14.



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writes: "Essenism then is Pharisaism in the superlative degree", as regards "cleanliness"<sup>1</sup>. Their zeal for purity found expression in their organization into narrow and exclusive communities, in their repudiation of trade and marriage, and in their extreme caution regarding bathing, eating and dressing. A complete breach with Judaism was made in their rejection of animal sacrifices and in their custom of turning toward the sun rather than Jerusalem when in prayer which Judaism expressly termed heathenish.<sup>2</sup> Further, they always kept themselves covered from the sun which to them was the representative of divine light. The Essenes were particularly decided in their belief in Providence which approached fatalism. Certain ascetic practices resulted from this, since the body was only the prison of the soul.

This brief review of the distinguishing features of the sects of Judaism shows us the basic beliefs upon which these divisions were established. As we proceed to consider the doctrines as well as the social and political aspects of Judaism it will be helpful to keep in mind the fact that the principal views of the orthodox Jewish religion were, as a rule, identical with those of the popular party, the Pharisees.

#### Social and Political Aspects of Judaism.

We find in the Jewish religion a rare and strange combination of nationality and universality. Religion was the controlling force of the nation. Man's whole duty was to

1. Schurer Vol II p. 210.

2. Ezekiel 8:16f.



written: "Essential to the superlative degree", as regards "essentialness". Their real for purely formal expression in their organization into narrow and exclusive communities, in their rejection of trade and marriage, and in their extreme caution regarding bathing, eating and drinking. A complete process with Judaism was made in their rejection of animal sacrifices and in their custom of turning toward the sun rather than Jerusalem. When in prayer which Judaism expressly termed *tefillah*, further, they always kept themselves covered from the sun which to them was the representative of divine light. The Kabbalists were particularly devoted in their belief in *tzitzit* - fringes which approached *tefillah*. Certain ascetic practices resulted from this, since the body was only the prison of the soul.

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keep God's law--nothing else mattered. Jehovah was Israel's God and if as a nation his will was done as defined in the Torah, then prosperity and peace would be the reward for His people, it was believed. Parallel with this narrow nationalistic ideal was a growing conception of God as the ruler of the universe. If Jehovah was the one and only God, then he must be God of the universe. Israel was chosen of God to receive and share with the nations of the world His great revelation. The Jews saw that Jehovah desired the salvation of all nations but to them, the only way of salvation was conditioned by the acceptance of the revelation--the law, as developed and interpreted by the Jewish people; that is Judaism. The one God could have but one religion. If the nations would not meet this condition, then God would in time destroy them. It was for Israel to set before the world the example of obedience to God's will. "To understand what Judaism was at the beginning of the Christian era, it is necessary to bear in mind the two-fold character of nationality and universality, which had been inseparably impressed upon it by its history. It had been a national religion, therefore Jehovah is the God of Israel; Israel is the people of Jehovah. The propositions are correlatively exclusive. However wide the power of Jehovah over the nations of the world, He has no nation of His own but Israel; and whatever power may be attributed to the gods of other nations, the nation of Israel has no god but Jehovah. This is the corner-stone



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of the religion of Israel both in the popular apprehension and in the explicit affirmation of the religious leaders<sup>1</sup> in all periods."

The theories of nationality and universality when applied to practical living resulted in two contradictory practices. On the one hand hatred and contempt for the heathen and his religious customs filled the heart of every loyal Jew, while on the other hand Judaism carried out a rather extensive program of proselyting. The bitter experiences that the Jewish people had undergone at the hands of the so-called heathen nations would naturally engender hatred for those peoples. The Jews justified this feeling, at least to some extent, by assuring themselves that a people who cruelly mistreated the chosen ones of God deserved nothing better than the bitterest contempt. It was the hand of the heathen that caused the fall of their nation, their exile, their suffering, and most of all the destruction of the abode of Jehovah--the Temple of Jerusalem. The Jewish "anti-Greek complex which resulted from the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabaeen revolt prevented them from consciously adopting any considerable elements of Hellenistic thinking."<sup>2</sup> Thus the gap between Jew and Greek was greatly widened and the extreme measures taken against Hellenization were deep-rooted in feelings of the hatred in every Jewish heart. Further the facts that the trend of the development of Judaism was so very different and distinctive when compared with other religions and that to

1. Moore p. 219.

2. McCown p. 116.







a Jew, his way was the only way, tended greatly to emphasize the feeling of contempt for heathenism and those who practiced it.

Strange as it may seem, there was, as a result of the Jews universal ideal, an organized effort to convert the despised heathen to Judaism among the Jews of Jesus' day. No other religious group in the world of that time cherished the conviction that its religion was the one true religion and that it was predestined to become the universal religion. This singular aspiration accounts for the missionary zeal of the Jews. Of course, they did not send out missionaries as we might think the term "missionary zeal" would imply. Such a program was not necessary because the Jews were scattered throughout the then-known world. The ordinary occupations of industry and commerce brought Jews and Gentiles together. Jews frequently entered political life outside of Palestine. They spoke the Gentile language and adopted much of the civilization of their surroundings. Conversely, many non-Jews lived in Palestine and there, came in contact with all phases of Jewish life.

The synagogue naturally was the chief institutional means of proselyting. Gentiles were allowed and encouraged to attend the services without previous requirements. To such visitors these services seemed to lack all the distinctive features of cultus and to consist essentially of reading scriptures and a discourse, all of which was more or less







loosely connected. There was little that was new to the heathen and the simplicity of such worship was undoubtedly attractive to many.

There were two classes of so-called proselytes. The "righteous proselytes" were those who rejected all other gods and became naturalized Jews. There were three parts of the rite which initiated a Gentile man into Judaism: circumcision, immersion in water, and the presentation of an offering in the Temple, for which a burnt-offering of doves or pigeons sufficed. A woman proselyte must carry out the latter two provisions of this rite. A person thus accepting the Jewish faith, theoretically became as a new-born child before Jehovah. He cannot be held responsible for the deeds done or duties neglected before his new birth. This made a proselyte equal to the Jew in law and religion, but it did not carry with it complete social equality. Of course, a Jew felt superior to a converted heathen, and a decided feeling of class distinction existed between the two.

That group of Gentiles called "god-fearing proselytes" was really not converts of Judaism. They remained uncircumcised and did not take upon themselves the full observance of the law. They accepted Jehovah as the one God, attended the synagogue services, observed the Sabbath and perhaps some of the dietary regulations. In other words their religion was only a part of Judaism. The term "proselyte of the gate" is also applied to a member of this group. It was undoubtedly







from among this class that Christianity drew many adherents. The Jews did not recognize this group of proselytes as "members of the household of faith" although they did revere them above the apostate heathen.

Moore suggests that women doubtless formed a large majority of both of these classes of proselytes.<sup>1</sup> Outside of Judaism in those days it was no-body's business what god one worshipped or whether he believed in any. The observation of the Sabbath and the peculiar regulation of diet required by Judaism would make one's religion so conspicuous that social disapproval and ridicule would follow for a man. A woman, however, was responsible only to her father and husband and thus it was easier for her to take a stand with Judaism. We have no way of estimating the total number of proselytes and adherents to Judaism to be found in the world at large in the time of Jesus, but unquestionably it was very great and the Jews were persisting in their efforts to make the religion God had revealed to their fathers, the religion of all mankind.

Judaism included all the elements essential to morality,<sup>2</sup> Herford claims. These are the recognition of (1) the difference between right and wrong, (2) the obligation of duty, (3) the authority of God and (4) the revelation of His will and nature. In practical life there can be no doubt that the Jews were a highly moral people. It must have required a great deal of self-control and self-disciplining to be a strict observer of the law. To a great extent Judaism was

1. Moore p. 325.

2. Herford- The Pharisees p. 142.







simply a method by which its adherents hoped to make practical the moral teachings of the prophets. It seemed that the method employed by the latter had failed--national destruction and the exile had followed them--so a new mode of expressing the same principle of morality was adopted. We cannot doubt that the definite precepts of the priestly code, did succeed in getting closer to the daily lives of the people, than the prophets were ever able to do. Theoretically, Judaism was the obedience to God's will as a matter of choice--not compulsion, but persuasion--with love as the motive. The law was to serve the people as a definite guide to conduct in daily living. As such the theory was good, but as it worked in practical life through the years down to the time of Jesus, it seems that it resulted, at least to some extent, in what we might call a false morality. The underlying motive of love was too often forgotten and the external expressions became the end in themselves rather than the means to the end. In other words, a Jew's morality consisted too much in doing a certain act at a certain time and place in a certain way, while he harbored in his heart hatred and contempt for his fellow who could not do that act as correctly as he. The letter of the law became the all important thing while its spirit was disregarded or forgotten. As far as the law covered the moral obligations of man to man, it may be said that Judaism was a highly moral religion; but in regard to the inner feelings which the law cannot regulate Judaism fell far short of perfection. The theoretical aim of legislation was to obtain a perfect society, static and sin-proof; and this



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Comparatively high social ideals resulted from the teachings of Judaism. With the restoration and the establishing of the priestly order, the religion of the Jews became too much of an affair of the Holy City and its temple "for a social ideal that was hostile to city life to continue to exist".<sup>2</sup> But in spite of this new urban ideal, Judaism was somehow able to stay the usual accompanying tendencies toward industrialism, exploitation and luxury. The fact that economic conditions were very simple due to hardship and foreign oppression, did much to keep the life of the Jews simple. Industries were carried on in the home. Every boy, and even a rabbi, was supposed to have a trade. There was nothing so honorable that it would excuse manual labor, and as a result there was very little hired or slave work. Shemaiah wrote: "Love work, and hate mastery, and make not thyself known to

1. McCown p. 180.

2. Ibid. p. 150.



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The simple life was further made possible because lack of opportunity had saved the Jewish society from the professions of war, commerce and politics. The nation had never gained sufficient strength to carry out an extensive program of conquest which would require professional warriors. Their fighting had been in general on the defensive by voluntary armies previously untrained.

As far as commerce was concerned the Jewish people had never gained enough power and wealth to engage in trade with other peoples to an extent which would require the labors of any prominent per cent of their population. We have previously suggested how their religion was their nation. The priests were the rulers and theoretically at least, their religious duties should be foremost in their minds. Thus politics were not only subordinated but limited to an hereditary group. The lack of these professions lessened the possibilities for class distinctions and the uneven distribution of common goods.

Labor was never despised by the Jews as it was by the Greeks and Romans. McCown writes: "The scorn of labor with the hands that contributed so largely to the failure of Greek and Roman society never infected ancient Judaism."<sup>2</sup> However, there was one respect in which labor was stigmatized as undesirable. Among the Am-haarez there undoubtedly were a great number who had the piety and desire to be strict observers of

1. McCown p. 153.

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the whole law, perhaps to become Pharisees, but because they lacked financial means other than their daily work, they were unable to devote to the law, the time and effort required of a strict observer. Accordingly they were looked down upon by the Pharisees as below them socially and religiously. Of course such distinction was not because these people labored, but rather simply because they did not carry out the legal precepts of Judaism. However, as we consider the society of the Jewish people in comparison with those of other nations of that day, we find in it rather high social ideals.

It was only natural that the bitter experiences of the Jewish people would result in the formulation of a theory of future redress here on earth. Such was the Messianic hope. God had chosen Israel and had revealed His will to her. Many times had she suffered oppression at the hands of her enemies. God had allowed this, probably because she had sinned; but surely there was behind God's choice a plan in which his people would be honored above all others and their religion would become the faith of all mankind. The prophets told of a coming Golden Age. It was foretold that God would raise up a great leader of his people, the Messiah, at whose hands the enemies of Israel would meet defeat and just judgment. Then would be established the "kingdom of God" with the "anointed One" at its head and all the peoples of the world would be subjected to his rule. Jehovah and his true religion, Judaism, would be accepted by all, with the

the world, the revelation, war, sin, repentance, forgiveness, and the after-life. Let us consider first the character of God.







result that peace, prosperity and happiness would be the just reward of the righteous. Jehovah was a just God and as such he would keep his promise. Of course Israel had to prove her loyalty and ~~this~~ she hoped to do by her individual members living according to God's will as revealed in the law.

Such a hope of future power and glory for Israel became the subject of a great deal of popular writing, known as the apocalypses. It is easy to see how and why the common people in the Jewish society would eagerly grasp and cling to such prospects for the future which would so greatly improve their conditions of living. On the other hand we would naturally expect those in the most desirable positions to possess less enthusiasm for so radical a change, at least since a then unknown leader was to be at the head of the new kingdom. The Messianic hope would be favored by this class in so far as its members felt that they might have prospects of securing a position of favor in the new order by virtue of their present office. This was the attitude of the Sadducees regarding the Messianic hope.

### The Idea of God Involved in Judaism.

All the doctrines of Judaism are based upon three general axioms: (1) God is just; (2) there is an intrinsic difference between right and wrong, and (3) the whole duty of man is to do the will of God. These are the essence of the Jewish faith and they involve ideas of God, His relation to the world, His revelation, man, sin, repentance, forgiveness, and the after-life. Let us consider first the character of God.







The idea of God held by the Jewish people was taken directly from the Hebrew scriptures for there were practically no traces of contemporary philosophies and other religions. The corner-stone of Judaism was monotheism; that is, the oneness and soleness of Jehovah. He was not simply the greatest of many gods, nor was His character of divided tendencies. He was the one and only God--no other power existed. Zoroastrianism was considered a heresy by the Jews because it made God exempt from the responsibility for sin by attributing evil to another power. God was the one supreme being without any reserve or limitation. His knowledge embraced all that had been, was, or was to be. Nothing could resist His power or thwart His purpose. He was absolute, almighty and all-knowing. The Jews never questioned God. His existence was an established fact which was never challenged in their minds. God simply was.

God was in Jewish thinking, both transcendent and immanent. No effort was made to reconcile these apparently contradictory characteristics, but both were accepted as important attributes. God's great holiness made it necessary that He be above and apart from the world. Man was so far inferior to Jehovah that direct dealings between them would mean the lowering or marring of that perfect holiness. Herein lies the basis for the theories concerning the ministers of God which we will consider a little later.

A great many of the ceremonies of the Temple worship, especially the rites for purification were done to protect the holiness of God. Still on the other hand God was near.







Even low-whispered utterances would be heard by Him. Not only was he near to those who called upon Him, but He was everywhere at the present. Rabbi Levi has aptly illustrated the immanence of God as the Jews saw it. A cave stood adjoining the sea and as the rushing sea came in it flooded the cave<sup>1</sup> but the great sea was not in the least diminished. So the divine radiance might fill a particular place, but at the same time the world would lose nothing of that presence. No sin could be committed in secrecy without God's knowledge. God was present with everyone and thus a guiding providence could be realized.

As a transcendent God, Jehovah's abode was in the "high heavens above the skies". From such expressions as "heaven and the heaven of heavens" a plurality of heavens is inferred.<sup>2</sup> God's dwelling place was, of course, the "most high" heaven. As an immanent God, his special earthly abode was the Temple in Jerusalem. Of course God did not abide there because he needed a place in which to live, but rather because man needed some visible thing by which to realize his loving presence.

The two chief moral attributes of God according to Judaism were justice and mercy. These were not conflicting principles, as the Stoics thought, vying for supremacy in the heart of God; but rather they were supplementary to each other. Justice was tempered by mercy, and the value of mercy

1. Moore p. 370.

2. Deuteronomy 10:14.







was greatly increased by justice. It is not the justice of hard law or of an impersonal divine attribute, but rather of an all-wise and almighty sovereign whose end is not the vindication of the law or of His own majesty, but the best interest of the individual, the race and the fulfilment of His great purpose in the universal reign of God. Even when sentence has been pronounced, it can be revoked and freely pardoned. As the justice of God must be tempered by mercy on one hand, so on the other hand, mercy alone would not keep sin out of the world and therefore, it must be accompanied by justice. If God's loving-kindness or mercy was to take all warnings and punishments away from His people, then they would never realize their transgressions, and thus go deeper and deeper into sin. Justice was necessary to the effectiveness of mercy. The term "mercy" might also be interpreted loving-kindness or simply love.

Three words adequately express the relation of God to the world and mankind. They are Creator, Ruler, and Father.

When the Jews thought of God as their Creator, they were not concerned with theories of evolution or their refutations. How the world was brought into existence was a settled question with them. God had a preconceived plan which because of His wisdom He was able to carry out without a change being made. He spoke a word--and instantaneously, without toil or pain, the world was in existence. Everything He created was perfect and man could not imagine an improvement on His work.







Every little insect belonged to God's world and was necessary to its completeness. The first great act of creation did not complete the work of God as a creator. The maintenance of the world was a kind of continuous creation. Every day added to the work. The history of the world was His great plan in which everything moved toward the fulfilment of His purpose. Not only the great whole, but every moment, every event, every person and every creature was embraced in God's plan and was an object of His providence. The most trifling event could not happen but God had planned that it should be so.

As the ruler of the world, God had power to do with it whatever He willed. No power could oppose Him or change His purpose in the least. However such a conception of God as almighty did not mean to the Jew that Jehovah was a tyrant. He did not wilfully use His power solely for the sake of proving to men that He was almighty regardless of right. Wisdom, justice, and a supremely good end were always the motives behind His dealings with men. God was patient and long-suffering with sinful men, because He was their almighty ruler and could do anything.

To understand the Jewish conception of miracles we must look at their way of thinking about God's rule in nature. Quoting from Moore, "a miracle....is an extraordinary phenomenon or occurrence wrought by God, presumably for some special purpose. It cannot be described as something at







variance with the laws of nature, transcending or suspending them, for, as has been said, there was no idea of laws of nature in the modern sense. Nor is it the mere wonder of it that makes such an event a miracle; it is the religious interpretation of the occurrence, the belief that in this phenomenon or event God in a peculiar way manifests His presence, reveals His will, or intervenes for the deliverance of His worshippers and the discomfiture of their enemies, to provide for their needs in distressful times, to avert calamities, to heal mortal diseases, and to save from a thousand evils where human help is vain. The greatness of the power of God is abundantly manifest in the ordinary course of nature; it is His goodness that is peculiarly revealed in the miracle as faith interprets and appreciates it.<sup>1</sup>

The two conceptions of God's relation to the world which we have already discussed; namely, those of creator and ruler were well established doctrines of the Old Testament scriptures. The idea of God as a father was comparatively new with Judaism and still it held quite an important place in the doctrinal thought of that religion. To some extent this conception of God's relation was applied to all men. The peoples outside of Judaism were potentially children of God but they had no knowledge of it save through the revelation which had been given to Israel. Only by sharing the heritage of the Jews could a Gentile become an effective child of God. Thus God's chosen children were intrusted with the mission of

1. Moore p. 376.







sharing their peculiar knowledge with the rest of the world. The love of the Father for His favored children was shown in His dealings with the Hebrew forefathers and was constant to their descendants. Though sinful, they were still His children and His heart yearned for them. In return for His great Father-love, He demands of them the love of their whole selves, souls, minds, possessions, and efforts. This conception of God gives a motive of love to the obedience of His will as revealed in the law and thus adds a desirable emotional touch to right conduct.

Israel was the chosen people of God because it pleased Him to reveal His truth to them. All wisdom that God had made known, or ever would make known to men, was contained in the law as given to Moses. Nothing could be added to it and nothing could be taken from it. It was absolute and complete. No matter what the people did, religion was never impaired or improved for it was perfect from the beginning. God's relation to man was made perfect when He gave His word to the world through the agency of Israel.

It was probably the influence of Persian ideals, which, when developed by Jewish imaginations and folklore, resulted in beliefs in angels, demons, guardian-angels, and spirits. Angels were the servants of God through whom He executed his will in the world. Providence, history, nature, and the celestial bodies are all administered by them. Even hell had its angel wards and tormentors. Some received individual names, as Gab-







riel and Michael. Cherubim and Seraphim, etc. were applied to orders of angels. Heaven, of course, was filled with angels, all worshipping and serving Jehovah. All of God's ministers were created with the world, but would never die. They were not immaterial but of a fiery substance which appeared as a blazing light. Eating and drinking were not necessary for angels, but they were attributed with feelings, and thus, interested in human affairs. The impulse to sin had no domination over these spirits; as it will have none over man in the age to come. It was necessary that God keep peace in Heaven because angels were like men in their dispositions, jealousies, etc. Of course, God was always a successful peace-maker and so His abode was always harmonious. An angel or demon's knowledge was limited since all they knew was what they chanced to overhear in Heaven. Satan, the adversary, was chief of the demons but His power was always secondary to that of God. The Death Angel sooner or later visits every man. Interesting as these beliefs are, they do not hold an important place in fundamental doctrines of Judaism. "God is represented as saying, 'If trouble comes to man, let him pray not to Michael, not to Gabriel, but to me and I will deliver him.'" <sup>1</sup>

#### The Nature of Man.

Human nature was a combination of two impulses--good and evil. The ideal life was that in which the evil was entirely

1. Herford-The Pharisees p. 153.







subjected to the good. Speaking of this evil impulse, Herford writes: "God planted it in human nature, not that man should yield to it--He never willed that anyone should sin--but that man should have the frequent opportunity of exercising His will on the side of good and against evil, and thereby realize more and more that likeness to God in which he was made."<sup>1</sup>

"Any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God" was considered a sin by the Jews.<sup>2</sup> Doing what was forbidden or failing to do what was commanded was sin regardless of cause. An intentional transgression was worse than an unintentional one. Failure to possess the virtues of a good heart was also considered sinful, but this thought of sin did not receive the greatest emphasis. It was thought to be possible to live in perfect harmony with God--a sinless life. Critics of Judaism say that its idea of goodness was "fear of sin". However, this is not entirely a negative attitude but rather the desire to fulfill the will of God under all circumstances. When one had sinned, he could always regain harmony with God through repentance and forgiveness.

The Jewish ideas of sin and repentance by the time of Jesus had been greatly individualized. With the breaking up of the community, religion naturally became an individual matter, dependent on a person's choice. So national purity was a matter of individual responsibility. The faithful Jews were the remnant of Israel and through them God would

1. Herford-The Pharisees p. 156.

2. Moore p. 116.







fulfill His purpose in the world.

Repentance included (1) the reparation of injuries to one's fellow in person, property or good name, (2) the confession of sin, (3) prayer for forgiveness and (4) genuine resolve and endeavor not to sin again. Rituals were looked upon as the modes of expression in repentance to God, and thus they lost their mystery and magic. Repentance was the turning of the soul back to God and ceremonies were the soul's ways of seeking forgiveness.

Mercy is the attribute of God's character which best explains His motive for forgiving sinful men. God's dealings with the forefathers of Israel proved to their descendants the affection and esteem in which the Heavenly Father held His children. But that did not mean that God would forgive the children's sins for the sake of the fathers. Israel must prove herself worthy of forgiveness if she could hope for God's mercy to be shown toward her. No sin was too great for God to forgive; He was always glad and willing to pardon. As a rule God's forgiveness freed man from all the consequences of sin. But there were certain sins for which repentance had no power to suspend the sentence of the punishment. For example, in case one profanes the name of God, repentance and the Day of Atonement atone for just one-third of the sin; bodily suffering through the year that follows brings forgiveness for another third, and death alone can wipe out <sup>1</sup> the rest.







"Merit" in Jewish thought was defined as something added to one's character by an act of service to God. Two factors were essential to the performance of any act: (1) the will of the one performing the act, and (2) the help of God. Merit applied to the first factor only; i.e., the willful performance of a good deed did add value to the character of the performer, but the deed could not have been accomplished without God's assistance. Thus, even though a Jew did feel that, after doing an act, he stood higher than before, still he recognized that God made it possible for him to do it; what might appear to be self-righteousness to his fellowmen, might, really be an attitude of humility toward God. Merit might be shared with others; one having much could share it with one having less. Also a sinful community might receive the blessings of God due to the merits of a few holy persons. Merit was never wasted but always resulted in good for someone.

All merit would receive a corresponding reward which might take any form from the inward peace of divine approval to something in the after-world. Material blessings were considered symbols of God's favor, still the Jews saw that often the just man was not prosperous, but rather had great suffering and hardship. Attempts to solve this problem resulted in the doctrines of the after-life in which the righteous would receive their reward and the wicked their







punishment.

The hope of an earthly Messianic kingdom also gave grounds for the the development of doctrines of life after death. Those who would be living when the Messiah would come would be rewarded with the joys of the Golden Age. But what of the righteous dead? Were they to have no reward? A just God would surely have some plan whereby they would be able to share the blessings which they deserved.

The Jewish idea of the life beyond was not identical with our doctrine of immortality. They believed that with death the soul died also. Then after the nations of the world were subdued by the Messiah, the bodies of the dead would come from their tombs and reunite with their souls for the great universal judgment. Those whom the Great Judge justified would live forever on a transfigured earth exempt from all infirmities of the flesh and evils of the world as it then existed. The wicked would be condemned to unquenchable fire. This hope of the life beyond gave rise to the idea that the afflictions of the just were not punishments but manifestations of God's love and favor, while prosperity of the wicked was just a way of allowing sinners to heap greater condemnation upon their heads. All things would be equalized in the after-life.







## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A necessary prerequisite to a study of the Judaism of Jesus' day is a survey of the previous religious history of the Jewish people beginning with the Babylonian exile. The overthrowing of the Kingdom of Judah brought such radical changes in the living conditions of the people, that new religious ideals and customs were the inevitable result. The period of Persian rule was ideal for the rapid development of the new religion. The rulers held lenient religious policies; and Nehemiah and Ezra were allowed to undertake reforms and the establishment of the new priestly order as perscribed in the Priestly Code. The Samaritan Schism had the effect of a sifting process for Judaism. The most devout Jews remained true to their religion and jealously placed a greater barrier than before around their law.

At the close of the Persian period, life under the law<sup>a</sup> was joyous and healthy religious experience. The priests, the scribes, and the institutions of Judaism all served efficiently to make the observance of the law vital and effective.

The Greek period was the testing time of Judaism. The hellenizing efforts of the high priests, followed by the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, aroused the champions of the law to it's defence. Judas, the Maccabee, led the rebellion which resulted in victory for the Jews. But the demoralizing effects of war caused the motive for fight-







ing to change from religion to independence and finally to conquest. Civil strife filled the following decades until the time of Jesus. Even, though this crisis resulted in the bitterest hostility toward heathenism and a divided people, still it was through it, that the Jews were saved from hellenization.

Chiefly during the Greek period there came into prominence certain sects of Judaism. The Pharisees were the popular party and were distinguished for their piety and careful observation of the law. Although not a political organization they did occasionally take stands in issues of government and always had the support of the people at such times. The Sadducees were a priestly aristocracy, conservative in views and supporters of the high priest in all he wished to do. The communistic communities of the Essenes had little influence upon the people as a whole and formed only a small per cent of the population. The schools of thought resulting from the different attitudes toward the law, held by Shammai and Hillel represented two tendencies of Judaism which persisted in Jesus' day.

A basic principle of the Jewish religion was that God's revelation to man was complete in the Pentateuch. Halachah was the name given to scribal activity in elaborating and interpreting the law proper. This classification included not only scientific midrash but tradition as well. Ritual received chief emphasis while civil and criminal law were less fully







developed. Haggadah was free religious speculation dealing with the historical and narrative passages of scripture. The doctrines of Judaism were developed in this branch of scribal work.

In the religious institutions of the Jews we find the secrets of the success of Judaism; namely, popular education, prestige, and authority. The home served efficiently to train the child. Elementary and professional schools were rather well established in Jesus' time.

The synagogue was of great value in supplying the daily needs of the people in instruction and worship. The Temple, with its national appeal and prestige, gave beauty and dignity to Judaism. The final authority on religious matters was the Sanhedrin. Sadducees and Pharisees formed the chief elements in this tribunal.

The sects of Judaism were greatly due to certain distinguishing beliefs held by those groups. The Pharisees were firm believers in (1) oral tradition, (2) the resurrection, the judgment and the future life, (3) angels and demons, and (4) fate combined with human freedom. All these, the Sadducees denied. Essenism was in general Pharisaism carried to its ultimate end and combined with certain peculiar customs; such as, the adoration of the sun. The Pharisees were distinguished from the Am-haarez by the careful way the former observed the law.

Judaism had both national and universal aspects which when applied in life resulted in contempt for heathenism on the one hand, and a program of proselyting on the other.







Jewish morality ranked comparatively high although the spiritual virtues were often deadened by too great an emphasis on the externals of religion.

Jewish society was necessarily quite simple and social ideals were high for that age. The Messianic Hope was a popular conception of an ideal reign of God on earth which His Messiah would establish.

The words, "one", "holy", "almighty", "absolute", "merciful", and "just" describe the Jewish conception of the character of God. In His relation to the world He was "creator" "ruler", and "Father". Jehovah's revelation to the whole world was given in entirety and perfectness to Moses. Multitudes of angels and demons were thought to be serving God in heaven, hell, and earth, to carry out His great purpose: but all, even Satan, were subject to the will of the almighty.

Perfect obedience of God's law would mean a sinless life, while any failure to obey, regardless of cause, was sin. The repentance of a sinner was a prerequisite to his forgiveness and certain rites expressed his penitence to God. The mercy of a heavenly father always made forgiveness possible although in cases of certain gross sins, repentance alone would not bring freedom from the consequences of those sins, but suffering and finally death alone could atone for such transgressions. "Merit" was something of value added to one's character as the result of performing a good deed. One's merit was never wasted and could be shared with others. Reward for merit



Jewish morality ranked comparatively high although the spiritual virtues were often obscured by too great an emphasis on the externals of religion.

Jewish society was necessarily quite simple and social ideals were high for that age. The Jewish ideal was a popular conception of an ideal ruler of God on earth which his Messiah would establish.

The words, "one", "only", "holiness", "abstinence", "purity", and "fast" describe the Jewish conception of the character of God. In his relation to the world he was "father", "father", and "father". Jehovah's revelation to the people was given in entirety and perfectness to Moses. The revelation of angels and demons were thought to be carried out in heaven, hell, and earth, to carry out his great purpose; but all, even Satan, were subject to the will of the almighty.

Perfect obedience of God's law would mean a sinless life, while any failure to obey, regardless of cause, was sin. The responsibility of a sin was a prerequisite to his forgiveness and certain other expressions his penitence to God. The story of a heavenly father always made forgiveness possible although in cases of certain gross sins, repentance alone would not bring freedom from the consequences of those sins, but suffering and finally death alone for each transgression. "Mortification" was something of value added to one's character as the result of performing a good deed. One's merit was never wasted and could be shared with others. Ignorance for guilt



might take any form from an inward feeling of peace to eternal happiness in the life beyond. The Jewish conception of the after-life consisted in a general resurrection and judgment at the time of the coming of the Messiah. The wicked would be condemned to everlasting torment while the righteous would be granted eternal life on a transformed earth.

Perhaps the greatest advance Judaism made behind the older religion of the Hebrews was that it was individualized. However it did not lose its national aspect. Also in beliefs concerning the life beyond and the idea of God as a Father, the Jews went far beyond the Hebrew scriptures.

Undoubtedly Judaism had its faults. Legalism took it for granted that, if the outward forms were observed, the inner spirit would develop, correspondingly, as a natural consequence but it did not always prove so. Another mistake was made in attempting a short cut to national preservation by placing barriers up to close other peoples out and keep Judaism uncontaminated, instead of developing a superior morality which would withstand evil influences. Further the principle that the law of Moses contained all truth stifled the hope for progress and every commandment regardless of content came to be considered of equal importance with any other.<sup>1</sup>

"The whole of Judaism is a strange bundle of contradictions." God was both national and universal. Hatred for heathen was coupled with proselyting. Though God was morally righteous, the chief emphasis was placed on ritual rather than morality.

1. Kent p. 226.







A personal devil existed against an independent God.

But Judaism also had its good points. The law was a concrete and definite guide to living. Those details which would seem trivial and boresome to us were, for many sincere Jews, a true expression of his love for God.

Judaism was a religion easily adapted to popular education and is to be highly commended for its achievements in this respect. There was certainly something very vital and real in a religion which, in spite of persecution and bitter opposition has stood the test of the ages and is today an effective religion for a great body of people.







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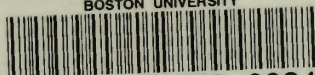
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